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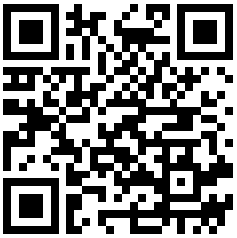

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 523. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 7TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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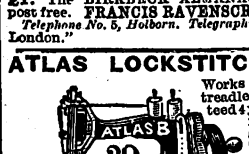

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SHORT STORIES

Edited By C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 523. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 7th, 1899.

In the Lift.

CAMPERTON stopped at the hotel desk long enough to read the letter which was handed to him; then he started for his rooms to dress for the club dinner.

But the club dinner was no longer in his mind. The contents of that letter engrossed his thoughts to the exclusion of everything else.

It was from his friend Birch, whom he had left in Cairo a month ago, and who now wrote that the Kingsley's were leaving that city for London, but would stay in Paris for a fortnight.

"So the coast is clear, old man, and you can come back," declared the writer persuasively. "You were an idiot ever to run away as you did. Join me here in a fortnight, and we'll still be in time for that little jaunt."

Camperton's jaws were set and his brows contracted as he stepped into the lift.

He knew that the Kingsleys, in returning at this time, were curtailing their original programme. And it was easy to guess the reason. They were coming home to prepare for their daughter's marriage to her titled suitor.

"And I must get away before they arrive," decided the young man. "I'll go back to Cairo without delay."

Through the midst of his mental abstraction he observed besides himself a woman—who had seated herself in a shadowy corner of the lift—but her presence did not change the current of his thoughts.

He saw only her hat as he dropped his vacant eyes upon her from his six feet of altitude, and he remained in the other corner, while the brass-buttoned boy slammed the door and pushed the lever, which sent the car soaring to regions above.

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The lift came to a sudden stop—so sudden, indeed, that Camperton not being prepared, involuntarily rose to his tiptoes, waving his arms like a huge bird about to take flight, and then pirouetted gracefully towards the other passenger in the opposite corner.

Before he could recover himself the lift shot downwards a few feet, and again stopped with an abruptness that bent his spinal column backwards like a steel spring and caused him to drop upon his knees in front of the lady.

Worse than that he had thrown out his hands in a frantic search for support, and in coming to the floor he unwittingly seized the fair stranger by each of her arms, almost crushing them in his grasp.

There was a moment of confusion, in which he had an indistinct vision of a white scared face under a large hat, and heard a half-suppressed shriek as the woman tried to draw away from him. The shriek brought him to his senses. He got upon his feet, stammering his apologies.

"There is no danger, madam," he began in his most reassuring tones. "We're fast between two floors, and must wait——"

He stopped short as he noted, with surprise and alarm, the attitude of the lady. She was still sitting in her corner, and was holding a handkerchief over her face, while little convulsive quivers and shrugs of the shoulders indicated that she was weeping.

In his contrition and his desire to soothe her harrowed feelings, he was about to sit down beside her, when a sound that was strangely like a giggle came from behind the handkerchief.

Camperton started up, flushing hotly.

"Do forgive me!" and the laughing voice suddenly became coaxing. "I know it is rude of me to laugh, but oh, Mr. Camperton, you can't imagine how funny you looked just now when you went hopping and waltzing about and kneeling at my feet—for all the world like a performing bear!"

Camperton did not hear. He was staring at her in blank amazement. He made several attempts to speak before the words would come.

"Miss Kingsley," he managed to articulate at last. His heart had almost stopped at the moment of recognition, but it was now beating furiously. "I suppose this is your astral body. It cannot be your real self."

"Oh, but it is!" said the girl with animation. "We left sooner than we had arranged to leave, and came direct to London. We arrived this morning. We are stopping at this hotel until our house is put in order."

"We?"

"Of course; papa and I. You don't suppose I would come alone?"

"I—I didn't know. I was not exactly expecting you to come at all. Your plans, as I understand them, would have kept you abroad for some time longer."

Miss Kingsley dropped her eyes.

"It is always easy to change one's plans, you know," she said, betraying a slight confusion.

"You did not honour me with an explanation of why you left," she said.

"But the note!" he exclaimed.

"The note, Mr. Camperton?"

"And my letter? Do you mean that you did not read my letter through—the one I sent to you two days before my departure?"

"I received no letter from you."

"But, Miss Kingsley, you—you answered it.

"You told me not to mention the subject again, and you are annoyed because I have insisted on reminding you of that letter. But I only want to explain why I wrote it. All Cairo was connecting your name with that of the Earl, and there were persistent rumours that you were to become his wife. It was common talk that your father had set his heart on the match, and nobody seemed to question your willingness to become a countess.

"The rumours and the gossip had a most depressing effect upon me. I think you know, Miss Kingsley, what my own hopes were. I had loved you for a year, although I had made no confession. I could not believe that you cared for the Earl, or that you would sacrifice yourself for a title, even to please your father. But the anxiety and suspense became so intolerable that I resolved to end the uncertainty and learn my own fate. Owing to your father's espionage I was unable to find an opportunity to speak with you alone. So I wrote that letter, confessing my love, begging the right to put an end to the rumours concerning you and his lordship, telling you how anxiously I should wait for an answer."

"I never received the letter," she said softly, without looking up.

"Never received it! Then how do you explain this answer?" he demanded.

"I wrote that note—yes, but not in answer to any communication from you. It was not intended for you. I do not know how it came in your possession. You will see that the upper part of the sheet has been carefully cut off. On the detached part was the name of the person to whom it was addressed."

She raised her eyes, and he saw that there were tears in them, but before he could speak she asked:

"Did you send your letter to me by post or by messenger?"

"Why, I sent it by Tomasso, the little Italian whom I often employed in that way."

"And he brought you the answer?"

"Certainly."

"Ah! I think I understand it now," she said, her expression showing the light of a sudden conviction. "Tomasso, as we afterwards heard, was in the pay of the Earl, who employed him to spy on the movements of people whom he desired to keep under surveillance. It was he, I am now sure, who intercepted your letter and sent back to you this note. His object was to get you out of the way. The note was originally addressed to him—in reply to his proposal of marriage—and he cut off his own name and sent it to you."

Camperton listened like one in a trance. Then he cried out sharply:

"Do you mean to say you are not engaged to him?"

"Engaged! Why, I hated him! He is a wicked, designing man. And he wasn't a lord at all—he had to fly because he would have been charged with impersonation! The real Earl was ill in an Italian village. It was on account of the worry of it all that I prevailed upon papa to take me home. Oh, Jack—Mr. Camperton! how could you believe such a thing of me?"

Ten minutes later, when they were released from their imprisonment in the lift, they parted with the understanding that they were to meet in the Kingsleys' rooms within an hour. There was a vacant seat at the club dinner that night, and the lift boy received a handsome present for holding his tongue.

B. LOVELL.

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THE ITALIAN'S SECRET.

By John K. Leys.

I.

TIMES were bad in the City. I was sitting in my office one day in a very despondent mood, when my old friend Dan Bunbury walked in. Dan was a good little fellow, honest "as they make 'em," though perhaps a trifle sanguine in disposition—short, stout, fair, and freckled. He helped himself to a cigarette and sat down.

I could see that there was something on his mind, and I waited patiently, chatting about indifferent matters till he should please to unbosom himself. At length it came out.

"Jack," he said abruptly, "I've got hold of a big thing, a very big thing. Would you care to go in with me?"

"Well, I'm obliged to you, old fellow, for the offer," said I; "but I'm bound to tell you that I'm rather in low water just now, so that I must be careful. Still, I dare say I could find a few hundreds for a really good thing, if that would be of any use."

Dan seemed to be scarcely listening. He stole to the door of my room and opened it suddenly, to make sure that no inquisitive boy was at the keyhole.

"It's all right, Dan," said I with a laugh. "I'm too old a bird to allow what is said in this room to be overheard. You may speak freely."

Dan sat down, and tried to light another cigarette, but his hand shook so that he gave it up. I could see that he was labouring under intense excitement.

"Jack," he said to me, "we've been friends since the old Silchester days, and you know I wouldn't let you in for dropping so much as a sov—and there are always risks. So don't think I want to haul you in for this. In fact, it was only after a good deal of bother that I got leave to bring you in with me, as I couldn't raise all the capital required. I'll tell you what it is, on the understanding, of course, that whether you come in with me or not it goes no further without the permission of me and my friend."

"All right. It's a syndicate, I suppose?"

"It's a syndicate, of course. And it's—well, it's saying nothing to say that it's the biggest thing that has ever been brought out, I won't say in London, but on this earth!"

This was interesting, at all events; and I sat regarding Dan as he passed his handkerchief across his brow. For a few moments he was silent, as if lacking the courage to broach the great secret.

"I'll tell you just what happened to me," he burst out at length, "and then you may use your own discretion about it. About six weeks ago I met at dinner at a friend's house an elderly man, an Italian, who was described to me as a great scientist. Chemistry, and particularly metallurgy, was said to be his department. We fell into talk after dinner, and he seemed to take to me, as I did to him. When he heard that I was in the City, he seemed interested, and hinted that perhaps we might be of service to each other by and by. We exchanged cards, and I found that he had taken a quiet place down in the country, that he might be able to carry on his chemical experiments without any interruption.

"He asked me to go and see him, and he told me then that he was making experiments for the manufacture of a substance in great demand, and that it was possible that he might ask my help to provide a little capital to perfect the experiments and bring out the invention. I said I would be happy to consider the matter, for I knew that nothing pays better than getting into a good invention at the start, and the subject dropped.

"Two days ago I had a wire from the Italian saying, 'I have succeeded. Come and see me to-night.' I went and found the old boy in a state of great excitement—and no wonder. His experiments had succeeded. He repeated them before my eyes next morning, and I am convinced that he has found a method of manufacturing the—the substance I spoke of. And I agreed to go in partnership with him. We want three thousand pounds

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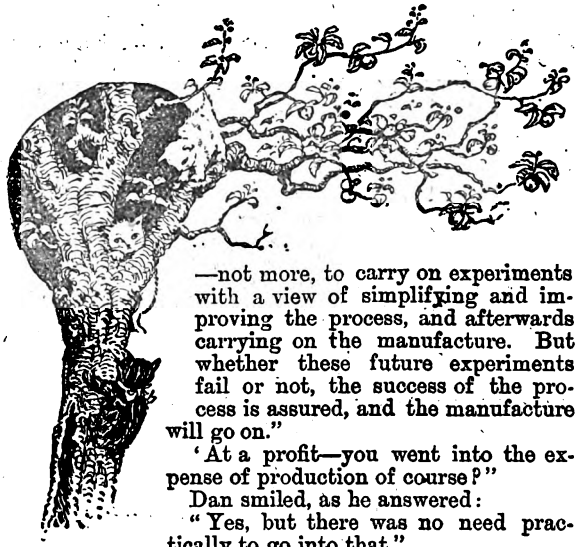

—not more, to carry on experiments with a view of simplifying and improving the process, and afterwards carrying on the manufacture. But whether these future experiments fail or not, the success of the process is assured, and the manufacture will go on."

'At a profit—you went into the expense of production of course?"

Dan smiled, as he answered:

"Yes, but there was no need practically to go into that."

"The profit would be so large?"

Dan nodded.

"We want three thousand pounds, as I told you," he said, "and as it happens I can't scrape more than two thousand together just at present. So, if you like you can come in to the extent of the odd thousand."

"But you haven't told me yet what is to be manufactured."

Dan looked this way and that, bent over to me, and whispered in my ear:

"It's—*gold!*"

"I knew you would laugh at it," said Dan without a trace of annoyance in his voice. "So should I have laughed if any one had said to me a week ago what I have said to you. But it's true, all the same. Listen now. Why should it be beyond the power of modern chemistry to manufacture gold any more than diamonds, or sugar, or a dozen other things that are artificially made every day? You know that diamonds can be made—true, real diamonds, though not of a size big enough to make it pay commercially. I repeat, why not gold? There is said to a certain number of simple elements in Nature. But that number is always changing—in the first place because chemists are always finding new substances, and in the second place because every now and then somebody finds out *that what had been supposed to be a simple substance is in reality compound*—in other words, he has resolved the thing into its constituent elements. Now, that is just what the Professor has done with gold. He has found out what it is made of, and having done that it is comparatively an easy matter to put the constituent metals into a melting-pot and fuse them into gold. Of course I don't know what these metals are, but I know that silver is the principal one. You can bring your own silver to be the subject of the test experiment, if you like.

"But I beg you, my dear fellow, to be very careful that you don't breathe a hint to anyone of what is going on; for you can see that if it were even suspected that gold could be manufactured, there would soon be a thousand chemists trying to discover the secret, and it could not be long till it was found out."

I assured him that I would be discretion itself.

"The thing has been done," repeated Dan. "Gold has been made under my very eyes, and if you like you shall see it done yourself. Now, what do you think of it?"

"I can scarcely say just yet," said I. "I won't insult you by declaring that whatever you say to me I believe implicitly; and I am awfully obliged to you for putting what seems a tremendously good thing in my way. But the fact is, a thousand pounds means a great deal to me, and I am bound to be cautious. Granting that your friend is honest, it is possible that he may to some extent deceive himself, especially as to the cost of production. You know all inventors are sanguine. There may be a hitch somewhere. So I think I would like a day or two to think it over."

"Quite right, old man," exclaimed Dan. "No harm in being cautious, especially when your caution will serve for both of us. Send me a line to-morrow, if possible, saying, 'I am off,' or 'I am on.' If you decide to go in for it (supposing that you are satisfied about the success of the experiments), meet me to-morrow at Waterloo at four sharp, and we will run down to the Professor's at once. I think you will find that the discovery will stand any test you like to apply to it."

On this understanding we parted.

II.

I am free to confess that although I had preserved my *sang froid* in my friend's presence, I was secretly as much excited as he was himself. I knew enough of chemistry to be aware that theoretically the resolution of a supposed simple substance into more elementary metals or gases was quite possible. Why, as Dan asked, why should gold be any exception to this law? Supposing that the Professor was not what I had been at first inclined to believe him, a vulgar charlatan—supposing he had really mastered this secret of Nature, what a vista was opened for any one who should be associated with him in the transcendent discovery! In the long run, of course, commerce would be brought to a stand still, and finally adapted to a new medium of exchange. Debts, whether public or private, would cease to exist. Every man belonging to a country which had a gold standard would offer to pay his debt at once. The terrible title of Creditor would henceforth be but an empty name. The distinction between poverty and wealth would exist no longer; or rather it would only apply to the possession or lack of land, of flocks and herds, of actual, tangible goods.

But of course we should take care that that should not happen during our lives. Till death claimed us we should be more powerful than kings. We should have the world in chains at our feet.

It would be perfectly practicable for me to found a colony, nay, to found an empire! What monarch could lack subjects who scorned the idea of taking tribute, and offered his people absolute security against want? Putting these more ambitious dreams aside, it was evident that if the Professor had rightly estimated the effect of his discovery—on which point I must of course satisfy myself before I proceeded a step—I would be a millionaire twice, ten times, twenty times over; and that surely was enough for any reasonable man.

It is not to be wondered at that I slept but little that night. And with the morning light I came to a decision. I would go down and see the Professor, taking a piece of pure silver with me. I would use the utmost care to make sure that there was no trickery anywhere

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—that by no possibility could gold be introduced into the crucible without my knowing it. I would be doubly, trebly, on my guard against all possibility of deception.

I would bring the silver back to town with me next day, never allowing it to be out of my possession a single moment till it reached the hands of the London silversmith; and I would abide by his verdict. If he assured me that gold was present with the silver in any considerable quantity, I would risk my money, in the hope of winning the largest prize man ever played for.

If there was no gold, or but a trace of it, along with the silver, I would say that the speculation was too risky for me, and leave it alone. This resolution I carried out.

I purchased a small ingot of pure silver from a firm of undoubted respectability, sent my friend the message we had agreed on, and met him at Waterloo the same afternoon at the hour he had named.

He had already wired to the Italian that we were coming; and as there was now no reason why I should be kept in ignorance of the name of my host, Dan told me that he had the Professor's permission to say that his name was Giovanni Galzoni.

Chadwick Hall, the house which the Professor had taken, stood in a remote corner of Hampshire, though not very far from a wayside railway station. It was a fine old place, but the appearance of the house was spoilt by a new building of red brick close by, which I rightly guessed to be the laboratory.

The Professor was a tall, dignified-looking man of perhaps sixty years of age. He wore his silver-grey hair cut short, and a long white moustache, which made him look like a retired colonel. He spoke with a slightly foreign accent, but his English was faultless.

As we stood together in the hall a door opened, and a girl appeared on the threshold.

"Come, Nora," said the Professor, "and let me introduce a new acquaintance to you." He pronounced her name distinctly—Miss Leonora Nugent; and I found myself bowing before a tall, slender creature with a sweet smile, a dazzling complexion, glorious black hair, and eyes of a ravishing blue. She smiled as she gave me her hand, but she smiled yet more frankly when Dan laid his great honest paw in her slender fingers, and I remembered that in all probability they were old acquaintances. Dan had not mentioned Miss Nugent to me at all, which I looked upon as a bad sign.

We sat down to dinner almost at once, and I may as well say that I fell head over ears in love with Nora, as Signor Galzoni called her, from the moment when my eyes first lighted on her face in the hall of the old house. It was plain to my jealous eye that Dan was in the same boat; and while I saw the awkwardness of playing the rival to Dan, who had brought me to the house, I could not bring myself to the point of steeling my heart against Nora's charms because my friend felt them as well as I.

For the rest of the evening however, Dan had his innings, and I was barely able to exchange half a dozen words with the Professor's beautiful niece. After dinner, Signor Galzoni took me to one side, and while Nora was singing Italian and Irish airs for Dan's benefit, I was being treated to a lecture upon inorganic chemistry, of which I comprehended very little.

We retired to rest early, intending that the whole of the following afternoon should be devoted to an investigation of the Professor's power to manufacture the most precious of metals.

Nora presided at the breakfast table with the charming grace of a girl matron, and when she withdrew at the conclusion of the meal, she left one of us, at all events, more madly in love with her than ever.

The Professor took us out to smoke a cigarette before commencing the labours of the day.

"I understand," he said, turning round sharply in my direction, "that my young friend has communicated to you frankly and unreservedly, under the seal of confidence, our hopes, and our necessities, and that you are prepared, when satisfied of the genuineness of the discovery, to join the scheme, and bring capital into it to the extent of one thousand pounds?"

"That is so," said I.

"I have been considering the matter very carefully," he broke off, turning to Dan, "and I am quite convinced that the only safe way to put our new metal on the market is to do it ourselves—in other words to set up as dealers in bullion. This will make it easy and natural for us to go in rather extensively for coining gold, and will make it possible for us to increase our wealth in a hundred ways at the same time. To establish a business of this kind will require some time, as well as some capital. Then there will be the furnaces to be built, metals and chemicals to be bought, as well as powerful dynamos—But I said three thousand pounds would do, and I will make it do. We must have no more noses in the dish. That is absolutely fixed in my mind."

To this both Dan and I warmly assented, and then the doctor proceeded to explain to me something of his method.

"The process is simplicity itself," he said. "I put into a crucible a number of metals, the principal one being silver. What the other ingredients are is part of my secret, but not the most important part of it. I care very little who knows what is added to the silver; the secret chiefly consists in knowing the exact weights of the substances added. All depends upon that, and you will excuse me if I say no more on that subject in the meantime. You will have every facility for seeing that no gold is introduced into the mass in the crucible—indeed I shall ask you to do me the favour of adding the various elements yourself, and you will easily be able to judge by the weight of what I give you to put into the crucible, whether it is gold or not.

"The mass, when fused, is subjected to a very powerful electric current, for the purpose of disintegrating the molecules of which the different substances are composed, and resolving them into their constituent atoms. During all this time the crucible will remain suspended over the furnace, and will be entirely within your sight.

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When the process is completed, the molten metal will be cast in a mould, and you will take this, or part of it, to a metallurgist of your own choosing in London, and he will tell you whether gold is in the mass or not, and if so in what proportions. And now shall we go into the laboratory?"

We went up to the red brick structure which I had noticed the previous evening. It was a spacious apartment, filled with the usual array of scientific instruments, prominent among which was an immense "dynamo,"—a furnace, capable of developing a high temperature, shelves with metals, drugs in bottles, and the other paraphernalia of a chemical laboratory.

While the Professor secured the door, Dan, who had visited the place before, took me forward to the furnace, and showed me a small earthenware crucible, which he asked me to examine. It was fitted with a lid, pierced with two tiny holes for passing the wires of the electrical machine, and a larger one for introducing a rod of fireclay for stirring the mass of molten metal.

The furnace was already in full blast. I produced the ingot of silver which I had brought with me, and under the Professor's superintendence it was soon reduced to a molten state. The wires from the great magnet were then introduced, and a powerful current was kept flowing through it. Next, I poured into the crucible various substances, of which I did not know the nature, but which I knew from the weight could not contain gold, which the Italian handed to me from time to time. As soon as each powder—they were almost all in the form of powder—was slipped through the hole in the lid of the crucible, the Professor stirred the molten mass, to make sure that the contents of the crucible were thoroughly mixed. This went on for some time, and after all the ingredients had been added, the force of the electric current was greatly increased.

During this process I could not detect the least trace of anxiety on the Professor's face. He wore the serene look of a man confident of victory. From first to last I never took my eyes off the crucible, and I was ready to swear that it was a physical impossibility for the Italian, however ready he might have been to deceive us, to touch the crucible without our knowledge.

At length Galzoni announced that the gold had begun to form in the vessel, and another half hour of waiting was all that was required. At the end of that time the contents of the crucible were poured out into three moulds of about equal size; and when the metal was cool, one of the ingots thus formed was handed to me, another to my friend, while the Professer kept the third for purposes of further experiment.

Nora appeared at luncheon, and when we rose from table she strolled out into the garden with me, while our host discussed with Dan the first steps which had to be taken for turning the great discovery into a commercial success. Naturally I made the most of my opportunity, and Nora told me a good deal about herself during our *tete-à-tete*. She was the daughter of the penniless son of an Irishman of good family, who had married an Italian girl. Her mother also was dead, and she had no friend but her guardian, who had brought her up as his own child, and had told her to call him uncle. I gathered that although he was never unkind to her he neglected her a good deal, that she was singularly ignorant of the world, and that Signor Galzoni dissuaded her from accepting any advances which had from time to time been made to her by people they had casually met in the course of their wanderings.

Ever since she could remember, Nora and her guardian had been wanderers on the face of the earth, seldom remaining long in one town or country. The Professor's friends were all men of his own age and nationality; Nora had never known what it was to have a friend of her own sex, and I could see that she was pining for companionship. It was too soon, of course, to declare the nature of my feelings for this beautiful and lonely girl, and yet I often thought afterwards that she must surely have guessed from my manner, from my very silence, many things that my lips did not dare to utter.

In the evening Dan and I returned to London.

Next day I gave the ingot I had taken from the Professor's crucible to a metallurgist, and a few days later I received from him a report as to its nature. My heart beat as I unfolded the sheet of paper; and yet I fully expected to see the magic name that would be a pledge to me of untold wealth.

I was not disappointed. The ingot contained gold to a considerable amount, in quantity quite sufficient to make its production immensely profitable. The bulk of the mass was composed of silver, which was of course of its original value. There was some alloy, worthless, or nearly so.

That very day I made the necessary arrangements, and sent Dan a cheque for one thousand pounds to be transmitted to the Professor as my share in the joint enterprise.

III.

In the course of a few weeks we had opened a bullion merchant's office in Paris, of which Dan Bunbury took charge. Already the gold was being turned out in considerable quantities, and was disposed of by being coined, or sold to goldsmiths. We had all agreed that it would be safer to begin in a small way, and extend our operations by degrees.

One day in November I was siezed with an uncontrollable desire to see Nora again; and as I had a tolerable excuse for calling on her guardian, I ran down to Chadwick Hall without giving any notice of my coming.

The Professor, I was told, was too busy to see me, but on my asking for Miss Nugent, I was shown into a small room on the ground floor, where, in the dusk of the November day, I found her alone, gazing out on the rain-sodden, desolate trees.

Her sweet face bore traces of recent tears, but my heart beat fast to see that a lovely blush overspread her cheeks as she turned and saw me.

It was evident that she was in a state of great dejection, and it seemed to be beyond my power to cheer her. At length in desperation I ventured to beg her to tell me the cause of her unhappiness. For answer she turned away and hid her face against the elbow of the couch on which she was sitting. She was evidently trying hard not to break down, but the tears would come. I went down on my knees beside her, and whispered to her that I could not bear to see her grief, because I loved her better than my life. In hackneyed phrases, I dare say, but in words that came straight from my heart, I tried to make her believe that I was only speaking the truth—that nothing on earth was of any consequence to me compared with her happiness, and I implored her to tell me what was troubling her. I took her little hands in mine, and by degrees I drew her nearer to me till her head rested on my breast.

Then in broken words she confessed that in happier

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circumstances she would have listened to me—she might have loved me, but at present, it was not to be thought of.

She owed a duty to her guardian, and he wished her to marry a countryman of his own, who had come to England for the purpose of pressing his suit. The utmost I could wring from her was a promise that she would give me an opportunity of speaking to her guardian, and that she would not marry anyone without letting me know.

How long we sat there I cannot tell. The twilight had faded into night when I suddenly recollected that I had an important engagement in London for a late hour that evening, which must be kept at all costs. I pulled out my watch, and found that I had not too much time to catch the last train which would enable me to be in town in time to keep my engagement.

Hurriedly I told Nora that I must go, and I was in the act of bidding her good-bye, when I heard the sound of voices and footsteps in the hall. A moment later the Professor entered the room.

He started on seeing me, and greeted me rather coldly, saying that he had been under the impression that I had gone back to town.

Unwilling to miss the opportunity of pleading my cause in person, I resolved to use the few minutes that were left in telling Signor Galzoni of my love for Nora, and making formal application for her hand. The Professor listened in silence, and he did not, as I had feared he would, tell me that what I asked was out of the question. He invited me to stay over the night, adding that he would give me an answer in the morning. When I explained to him that this was impossible, as I must return to London immediately, he said it would be unnecessary for me to walk through the rain to the station, as he had ordered a fly to come for him that evening, and it would be at the door in a minute or two.

This relieved my mind, and I recurred to the subject of my passion for Nora. He heard me patiently, but said that he must have a day or two to think it over—a request which was certainly not unreasonable, and which made me hope that he would not forbid the engagement. But while we had been talking, the minutes had been flying, and on looking at my watch, I saw that in foolishly depending on the arrival of the fly I had lost my train. There was just the possibility that it might be a little late, and that I might catch it if I took to my heels at once. I caught up my hat, and disregarding the Italian's entreaties that I would stay over the night, or wait till the next train, I shook him by the hand, and literally ran from the house.

The distance was not great, but to my dismay I saw the steam from the engine of the approaching train while I was still some little way from the station. Putting on a trifle more speed, I raced on, vaulted over a fence which shut out the public from a short cut across a siding, and reached the platform just as the train started again.

A man with a red beard was standing idly on the platform watching the retreating carriages. I dashed past him, and making a supreme effort tore open the door of a compartment and sprang in. Turning immediately to close the door behind me, I saw, to my surprise, that the red-bearded man, stimulated, apparently, by my example, had suddenly made up his mind that he would not be left behind. He was in the act of clambering into the adjoining compartment.

I reached town, and drove to my rooms, where I changed my clothes for evening dress; and I was getting into my hansom again, when I noticed a man lounging (in spite of the rain) against the railings on the opposite side of the street. As I passed him he looked steadily the other way. But I felt certain that he was none other than the man who had followed me into the railway carriage that afternoon. Certainly both men had red beards. It struck me as a curious coincidence, but it was not until afterwards that it occurred to me that the man might be a spy.

IV.

SIGNOR GALZONI had promised to send me his answer by letter. But two days went by, and I heard nothing from him. I was getting uneasy, when on the morning of the third day a letter bearing the Chadwick postmark was put into my hand. It was not from Galzoni. The moment my eyes fell on the handwriting on the envelope, I knew that the letter was from Nora.

I tore it open, and my face blanched as I read. In a few tear-blotted words Nora bade me good-bye. She assured me that this was a final farewell, that it would be impossible for us to meet again. She was leaving England, she said, with her guardian, and before the letter reached me, they would be far away from the Hall Almost in so many words she told me that I possessed her heart, but she said that she was not free, and we must part.

Without waiting to see whether a train was about to start for Hampshire, I rushed downstairs, caught a hansom, and drove at the horse's best pace to Waterloo.

It was possible, I thought, that something had occurred to delay the Professor's departure—it was possible, even if I was too late, I might find out where he had gone. Of course he would return, or at least it would be easy for me to find him by-and-bye.

But I feared that his intention was to separate Nora from me permanently, or at least until after her marriage to the suitor whom he preferred. Either out of regard for him, or for some reason, he had resolved that Nora and I should not meet again; and he had asked for delay only that he might arrange his plans for placing her beyond my reach. But I determined that I would not be so easily baulked.

When I arrived at the Hall I found it deserted. Not a living creature was about the place. I could glean no information at the village or the railway station, except that the station-master assured me that the Italian had not left by rail.

I was in despair, when it occurred to me that I might be able to learn something from the owner of the Hall. Even if he could tell me nothing as to the Professor's

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present movements, he might be willing to give me the names and addresses of the references he had given when he took the house, and through them I might be able to trace him. I had no doubt that he would communicate with Dan Bunbury shortly, but I could not brook the delay.

I got the landlord's address, and went part of the way by rail. The rest of the distance, some five or six miles, I had to walk.

I had scarcely set out to cover this piece of country, when a deluge of rain drove me to take shelter at a wayside public-house. As I ran up to it, a man whom I took to be the ostler came out of the tumbledown stable. I met him face to face, and to my amazement I recognised him as the man who had followed me to my lodgings three days before! I was thunderstruck. It seemed absolutely impossible that the man could have followed me from Chadwick, much less from London, without my knowing it. And what he could be following me at all for, I could not conceive. I resolved to question him, and went after him into the stable, but I could make nothing of him. He stoutly denied that he had ever set eyes on me before, and in his turn began to put some questions to me, which I considered an impertinence. I left him, therefore, almost persuading myself that my imagination had been playing me a trick, and went into the inn.

A cart of coals and a carrier's cart were standing before the door, and the carters were drying their steaming garments at the fire of the inn kitchen. As there was no fire in the parlour, and the room looked damp and cheerless to the last degree, I went into the kitchen, and made my way to the ample hearth, calling at the same time for a pint of ale.

As I advanced, a woman whom I had not at first noticed turned sharply round, and then, after a moment's hesitation, retreated by a side door. There were four or five labourers, whose work had apparently been stopped by the rain, seated on a bench that ran along one side of the kitchen; and as I stood drying my clothes a dispute sprang up between one of them and the driver of one of the carts which were at the door.

I paid no attention to it, but took a vacant chair in the chimney corner; and as I sat there the combined influence of my fatigue, the ale I had drunk, and the warmth of the fire, made me drowsy. Suddenly I started up, wide awake, convinced for the moment that the voice of the man I had been thinking about all day, and of whom I had been dreaming at that moment, was actually sounding in my ears. I started up, half expecting to see the Italian's grave face looking down into mine, and found that the kitchen was nearly empty.

The labourers had gone back to their work, the carrier's cart had disappeared, and the other, laden with coals, was slowly surmounting a rising-ground a short distance from the inn-door. The driver, his hands in his pockets, and his slouch-hat drawn over his ears, trudged heavily beside it; and at his side walked, with light, elastic step, the young woman who had left the inn kitchen as I entered it.

There was something in the girl's gait, in her manner of carrying herself, that struck me, and held me a prisoner at the window as long as the cart was in sight.

It was now almost dark, and I would have started at once, but I had eaten nothing since the morning, and I ordered a hasty meal of bread and cheese. As soon as it was despatched I called for the reckoning, and rose to go.

At that moment a poor old creature, bent with age and rheumatism, came through the kitchen, and as she passed me she thrust an envelope into my hand. It contained nothing; but there was written on it, in place of an address, the words:

If you value your own safety, stay where you are for the night, and return to London by some indirect way.

I rushed after the woman who had given it to me, but she maintained that she had picked it up on the floor, and that as she could not read, she had guessed that it belonged to me. For a moment or two I felt bewildered. Then I recollected the voice I had heard, as if speaking in a dream—and that poorly-clad, slender form—good Heavens! was it possible?

I dashed out of the house, and ran up the ascent up which I had seen the cart pass a quarter of an hour before.

Although it was now dark, I had no doubt that I would overtake the heavily laden cart, unless I came to a cross road, and in order to avoid this risk, I pushed on at the top of my speed. I had not even time to think what it meant that Signor Galzoni should be escaping in disguise.

After running a mile and a half I stopped and heard the low rumble that told me the cart was near at hand. I ran on, overtook it, and saw to my joy that the same two figures were plodding on by its side.

I passed them, turned, and looked the supposed carter straight in the face. It was the Professor, beyond a doubt. And the country girl at his left hand was none other than my own peerless Nora!

"You, here, Signor!" I exclaimed, with affected surprise. "Pray, what does this mean?"

"You fool!" burst out the Professor—and I noticed that he now spoke without the slight foreign accent I had always observed hitherto—"You fool! You can't say I didn't warn you!"

So saying he hurriedly turned his ungainly vehicle down a narrow lane which we were passing, and after going on for a few yards in this new direction stopped it. He then went back to the mouth of the lane, and stood there, in the rain and darkness, listening, anxiously listening. Then, apparently satisfied, he returned to the cart, near which Nora and I were standing.

"Signor Galzoni," said I, going up to him, "or whatever your true name may be, I think your conduct is strange and suspicious to the last degree. But, no matter what you may have done or left undone, that does not affect your ward. I repeat that I wish to make her my wife. You are evidently in great danger. Will you trust Miss Nugent to me? I am ready to swear to you that we shall be married as soon as—"

"She would be no more safe with you than with me!" exclaimed the Professor.

"Not safe with me! Why not? Do you mean that I am in danger as well as you?"

The answer was a harsh laugh. An angry retort was on my tongue, but I remembered the red-bearded man at the railway-station, in the London street, at the wayside inn, and I remained silent.

"Look here, girl," he said turning roughly to Nora, who had not uttered a word,—"time presses, and it's going to be a wet night. Will you stick to me, or will you go with this young fellow, who seems to run straight, though he is a most thundering fool. Or will you go off on your own hook? Hang it if I don't think that would be the best thing for you to do, for the chances

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are that by morning both he and I will be in chokee.—
—Now, look sharp—which is it to be?"

For answer Nora stole to my side, and laid her little wet hand in mine.

The Professor's voice, when he next spoke, sounded as if he felt relieved by her decision.

He advised that we should separate, a counsel which I was willing, indeed eager, to follow; and it was agreed that Nora and I should continue along the lane, while the Professor backed his cart into the high road and continued his journey.

I sent Nora on a little way in advance, while I waited behind to help Galzoni to get his cart back into the road, not a very easy matter, as there was no room in the lane to turn the horse and cart.

We had nearly reached the road when we heard the sharp sound of horses' hoofs. I forced my way into the hedge that bounded the lane on my left, and found that the fence was so thick and tall that I was in a place of comparative safety.

But before the Professor could follow my example the mounted police were upon him. He made no resistance, and as soon as he had been secured, two of the constables leapt into the cart and began tossing the coals which it contained into the roadway.

They had not worked long before one of them gave a cry.

"It's here, sir" he shouted, "and mortal 'eavy it be!"

I had heard enough. I turned and ran without a sound over the rain-softened grass till I had overtaken Nora.

She was of course on the other side of the hedge, but I called softly to her, and as soon as I came to a gap I rejoined her.

We walked all that night, for we did not dare to seek shelter, resting occasionally under a haystack, and in the morning we returned to London by the Great Western line.

That very day, following the advice of my solicitor, I gave information to the police to the effect that I had been swindled out of a thousand pounds by the man who called himself Galzoni. I was unwilling to join in the prosecution of Nora's guardian, but it was necessary my lawyer told me, that I should take some step to dissociate myself in a marked way from the swindler, seeing that the police had evidently suspected that I was an accomplice rather than a dupe. As it turned out, the charge I brought against Galzoni was never investigated, as there were several which had the priority to mine; but as the booty had been recovered when Galzoni was arrested, I recovered the greater part of my thousand pounds.

Dan was less fortunate. He had associated himself more closely with the rogue than I had done. He had never suspected for a moment that the gold he was dealing in was merely a fraction of that which the so-called Professor had obtained from his numerous dupes. He thought, as I did, up to the last moment, that it had been honestly manufactured. But he considered, wisely enough, that he would not get the police to believe that he had been so credulous. He left his affairs for me to wind up, and made tracks for Johannesburg, where he has since done well.

It turned out that "the Professor," had been playing this game for years, frequently changing the scene of his operations. Most of his dupes were so much afraid of the ridicule they would meet with if they complained in public, that they refused to prosecute, even when they had been rather badly hit. The peculiarity of his scheme of plunder was that his dupes kept his secret almost better than he could keep it himself, for fear that other people would share the treasure which they believed they were about to enjoy. Of course, it was necessary that each should believe himself the only man whom the Professor had taken into his confidence, and I have no doubt that the reason of his lying to me about the fly, and trying to persuade me to stay overnight was that he had a visitor from the city in the house at the time, and he feared that he and I might know each other, and might meet on our way back to town.

I puzzled for some time over the mystery of the gold appearing in the crucible, and I came to the conclusion that it must have been introduced by means of a hollow in the rod of fire-clay with which the Professor had mixed the molten metal. I now understood why he had been so particular in keeping secret the weights of the added substances. It was in order to guard against a demand that the weight of the resulting ingot should be compared with the weight of what had been seen to go into the crucible. No doubt he had kept part of the ingot in order to prevent its weight being ascertained.

Notwithstanding my most earnest entreaties, Nora refused to marry me until some time after the Professor's trial, for, innocent as she was personally, she had learnt the secret of his misdeeds before his flight, she had accompanied him when he tried to escape, and she would not compromise me so long as there was a fear that she would be involved in his punishment. But that fear has long since gone by. For three years Nora and I have been living happily together as man and wife. The Professor must be out of prison by this time, but we have not seen him, and our hope is that his path and ours may never cross again.

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A CLEVER WOMAN.

MY Lady Wynne's jewels had been stolen, and the old house of Wynne was in a dreadful commotion. Doors were being banged; maids stood in groups discussing this thing which had happened in their midst, and offering their own opinions and suggestions. They were glad of a little excitement, it is true, for Wynne in the winter was a dreary house, and their tongues went quickly. Her ladyship's companion moved through them, hearing everything and saying nothing, and carrying all she heard to my lady upstairs. But my lady was not thinking of the servants' sayings and doings. All her thoughts were with her husband, and what he would say when he came home, and found the jewels that the wives of Wynne had worn for generations gone.

"Oh, hush, Miss Egerton," she said, raising her pretty dark head. "I do not care what the housemaid thinks. She knows nothing about it."

Edith Egerton smiled her amiable smile, that showed so perfectly her small white teeth, and shaking back her golden curls, answered my lady softly.

"One never can pay enough of attention in these cases."

In the bright, dark eyes of the young mistress of Wynne the tears were gathering again.

"Oh, whatever will Sir Charles say!" she burst out. "I know he thought me too young to take care of them. He said I was the youngest bride that had ever worn them yet, and I'm sure no one knew where the key was but Emily and yourself."

Miss Egerton smiled again.

"Maids are always supposed to be perfectly trustworthy, but of course we can do nothing until the detectives come," she said insinuatingly.

Lady Wynne looked at her sharply, but she did not speak. Somehow she did not like that soft, cooing voice.

"It was so strange," her ladyship began again in a few minutes. "To think that nothing should be taken but my jewels."

Yes, it certainly was strange. One of the side-doors had been left open overnight, although no maid had been found to own the fault, and when my lady woke in the morning, it was to see her jewel-box lying open on the floor, and the keys dangling from it. Ringing furiously for her maid, she searched wildly in every corner of the room.

But it was useless; the jewels were gone, and all her ladyship's tears could not bring them back. Her husband was away, and the young girl-wife of Wynne was at her wit's end. True, her self-possessed companion was there to advise and direct, but Alicia Wynne felt strangely distrustful of the golden-haired, apple-blossom complexioned little creature just then. She seemed to know so well what to do, think, and say, that her ladyship felt dreadfully silly and girlish beside her.

But the detective was come and was summoning the household together, and practical Miss Egerton was ordering the servants. Not that there was much to be got out of them. They had seen nothing, heard nothing, until her ladyship's bell had aroused them, and even then it was only from Emily, the maid, that they learnt what had happened. Although Emily herself could tell him little, the detective questioned her very closely. It was evident from his manner that he suspected her, and anyone watching Edith Egerton would have seen a triumphant glance shoot from her eyes. As for young Lady Wynne she could only cry and wish Sir Charles would come home, and within himself the detective wished that, too. He felt a slight disgust for all those women, except Miss Egerton. There seemed to be an air of business about her.

At last Sir Charles came. He scarcely gave the jewels a thought, until he had assured his girl-wife that he would rather have them lost than have her in hysterics. And his words had the effect of driving the tears from her dark eyes as the sun drives the morning mist away, and she was ready to talk the affair over with her husband in a manner that would have astonished the detective, who had put her down as a senseless baby.

"You say that only your maid knew of the place where the key lay?"

"Yes—and Miss Egerton," she added. Her husband went on speaking, but he did not notice how silent his wife had grown. The words—"and Miss Egerton—" kept sounding in her ears, and seemed to point to the golden-haired little woman. She shuddered and tried to drive the thought away, but it only forced itself upon her more strongly. Suddenly her husband turned to her and said:

"You must dismiss this maid of yours."

Lady Wynne rose to her feet, and answered with an angry glance towards Miss Egerton:

"I shall not. Whoever stole my jewels, it was not Emily."

She saw the amused look Edith Egerton exchanged with her husband, and the young wife's temper rose, for in her heart she knew they thought she was a baby, hardly fit to manage for herself. Sir Charles smiled down on her, as if he smiled on a child, and said coaxingly:

"We are not too sure of that, but I think she had better go."

The soft eyes of the lady flashed fire, and she was resolved to fight it out. But gentle Miss Egerton and her husband were too strong for her, and she was obliged to give in with a burst of tears. But as she left the room, she looked at Edith Egerton with angry, suspicious eyes, and with a heavy heart sought her maid.

Emily Miller was a tall, superior girl, entirely devoted to her young mistress. Alicia had brought her with her to the old house of Wynne—when she had come to it a bride, and Emily had been more a companion than any one else, ever since. And the sight of my lady in tears drew a hurried exclamation from her lips, as she started forward to meet her.

"Is there anything wrong, my lady?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, yes!" sobbed herladyship. "They are accusing you of stealing my jewels, and they say I must send you away."

The words came trembling out, and Emily stood listening as one dazed.

"Me take your jewels, my lady?" she repeated slowly.

"They are saying it, and they make me promise to send you away."

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Emily had gathered her wits together again, and, as she drew herself up, she said proudly:

"I would not stay in a house where I was suspected for worlds!"

"Oh, Emily, I don't suspect you, and I don't want to send you away."

"I don't blame you, my lady," the maid answered quietly. "Miss Egerton's at the bottom of it."

Alicia Wynne looked up quickly, but she did not speak. Although she did suspect Miss Egerton, she was too wise to discuss the matter with her maid.

Emily Miller left, and Wynne settled down to the old winter life again. The jewels had not been found, although the detectives had worked hard, and although every little thing had been thoroughly sifted. And my lady went about amongst them with her sweet, ready smile, and saw more than any one of them thought with her bright dark eyes. In fact, she was the cleverest detective of them all, as the future was to prove.

* * * * *

"I have not had a chance yet, but you shall have them as soon as possible."

"It will be better to get them out of here. Are you sure they are quite safe?"

"Quite," and the speaker laughed lightly. "But if you come this day week, I think it will be all right. That lynx-eyed wretch is going to a dinner-party. She has made a point of staying at home of late."

"Very well, then! Good night."

The sound of heavy footsteps crashing through the brushwood followed his words, and Alicia Wynne came out of her hiding-place. But it was not on the man her eyes were fixed, but on the little graceful figure of a golden-haired woman, gliding through the misty light. A peculiar smile parted her red lips, and she said quietly to herself:

"It will not be my fault if I do not wear my diamonds next season."

* * * * *

"Are you going to Mrs. Vane's to-night?" asked Sir Charles that day week.

"Yes."

"Well, I'll meet you there. I have very important business to transact at Carnick to-day."

His wife smiled sweetly, and a peculiar gleam shot from her eyes as her husband strode away. And that afternoon her ladyship's tall figure crossed the wintry fields, and sought a little thatched cottage. Emily Miller opened the door in answer to her knock, and my lady entered. A long whispered conversation took place between them, and they seemed to understand the matter in hand fully before her ladyship left.

That night my lady's carriage had hardly issued from the lodge-gates when she furiously pulled the checkstring. The horses were quickly stopped, but before the footman had descended, Alicia had jumped out, and had raised her fair face to the old coachman.

"It's such a lovely night, John, I think I'll walk through the wood while you drive round the road. I'm early anyway."

And before the dumfounded servant could answer, my lady was gone. She walked swiftly to the shade of some bushes, and then stood. Her white dinner-dress was carefully hidden by a long grey cloak, and a passer-by would never have noticed her. Suddenly Emily appeared through the trees, and my lady started forward eagerly. But the maid only shook her head.

"She is gone, my lady. She has left with him by train."

"But she will come back. Her things are all here," gasped Alicia.

"No, my lady. She's had them sent away bit by bit without anyone knowing."

"Why didn't you stop her?"

"I could not, my lady. I had no proof."

Her ladyship's fair face was a study, but the sound of the horses' feet on the frosty road made her start.

"I'll see you again, Emily. I must go now," and she ran away through the trees.

Sir Charles was at a loss to account for his wife's clouded face that night, but if anything his own was more clouded when she told him the story on the way home.

"To think that they should have been so near to us all the time," he said.

"Yes; but I always had my suspicions," and her ladyship leant back and gave her jewels up with a sigh.

* * * * *

The bright lights from the gases of a London mansion shone on all that was fair and lovely—beautiful women, gorgeous dresses and shimmering jewels. Soft laughter and voices filled the air, and everything seemed joyful.

"See! There is young Lady Wynne," whispered one lady to another. "Her new jewels are even finer than the last."

As the other turned to look at the tall, winsome figure of the young mistress of Wynne in her flowing white dress and glistening diamonds, her eye was arrested by another woman—a dainty little creature with dark hair, light blue eyes and glowing complexion, and wonderful sparkling jewels.

"Who is that?" she asked of her friend.

"Oh, the little dark woman! Ethel Macdonald I think the name is. I met her some nights ago."

But the other's eyes had wandered back to young Lady Wynne. There was a puzzled look in my lady's face. Decidedly the dark woman's face was familiar to her—perhaps not exactly the face but the light blue eyes. Suddenly those who were watching her saw the languid, wondering air pass away, and a startled look flash from her eyes. Her husband came to her side instantly, and she turned to him quickly.

"Charles, it's my Norpolli emerald. I could not mistake it."

Her husband looked towards the dark woman to whom she was pointing, and on whose arm shone an emerald of unusual size and brilliance. One rapid glance sufficed him.

"It's Miss Egerton," he said quickly.

"Impossible!"

"It is. She has dyed her hair."

He was gone before she could answer, and she did not see him again in the house that night, and Miss Ethel Macdonald was gone too. But when she reached home that night he was waiting for her, and he had the jewels with him.

"We've lost her, but I've got the jewels. She slipped through our fingers like water. She's the cleverest woman I know."

Alicia was looking at the Norpolli, but her brows went down as her husband mentioned Miss Egerton's cleverness. But clever as the little woman was, some three years after someone very like her was convicted of robbery to a large extent, and made the acquaintance, perhaps not for the first time in her life, with the inside of a prison.

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DUNCAN ANSTRUTHER.

Sandy Carmichael.

By CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc.

BOOK I.—CONCERNING THE FLIGHT FROM CULLODEN MOOR.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty. They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

CHAPTER V.

How the cutter was victualled; how a compass was procured from the snow Biddy, *of Waterford; and how the moonlight failed off Bristol Channel.*

IN the year of grace 1745 sheep-stealing was a hanging offence, as was also the case at the beginning of this present century of enlightenment. But to men of whom the death sentence had already been passed for treason against King George the Second's Government, the reimposition of that penalty made but little difference. A man can be hanged but once. Or, at all events, if the authorities chose to hang him a second time, it would be a matter of utter indifference to him, as, by virtue of the first experience, he would have risen superior to all sublunary pains and indignities.

And so, as Sandy Carmichael was hardened by previous acts of sheep-lifting undertaken at the instance of his former owner, Duncan Carmichael, it may be taken for granted that the cutter's crew set about their hunting with but few qualms of conscience.

They had gone past Charsaig, and had come to an anchor in a wild, desolate little bay shut in by islands, just a mile further south.* There was no human habitation nearer than the tiny village on Lough Swen. There was but slender chance of being disturbed, yet they did not dawdle for all that. It was late afternoon when the little cutter rounded to her anchor, and, after waiting for dusk, Sneyd and O'Neill put ashore. They had not far to go. Just over the ridge they came upon a dozen sheep sleeping in a scattered circle of twenty yards' radius. The dirk did its work. Five were secured before the rest ran away into the darkness.

One by one the carcasses were carried over the rough ground to the shore, a task which occupied them well on into daylight; for, owing to the steepness of the hills which ran down to the loch, a considerable circuit had to be taken with each load. But by the time the first sunbeam had begun to fall on the summit of Clachbheinn in Jura across the sound, the clumsy wooden-stocked anchor was catted and fished once more, and the cutter was standing out from her anchorage close-hauled for the fresh northerly wind. Once outside and clear of the Coinean Island, the sheets were started, and away she went for Lowlandman's Bay.

The two hunters—sheep-stealers, to be more prosaic—took their watch below; that is, they lay down and slept on the ballast, so as to be ready on the instant if they were wanted.

The boy, at his own suggestion, steered. He had been resting all night whilst the others worked, and so was the freshest of the trio. But, had he been dog-tired, he would have volunteered to steer just the same. His notion of the laws of slavery was vague—everybody was not as enlightened in 1745 as we are now—and he considered Sneyd his owner, by right of conquest from Duncan Carmichael. Duncan Carmichael he hated (with some reason), and worked for him through motives of fear alone. Sneyd he liked, as far as it was in his mind to like anybody; and the Irishman he liked too. They had been kind to

* One of the bonniest anchorages on the coast. The author knows it well. Save for a rock, bare at three quarters ebb, right in the middle, the ground is all good. The place is very pretty, and the high shores around have a look suggestive of never being trodden on by human foot.

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him. Very probably, so he thought, there was an ulterior motive to their kindness, but that need not be reckoned with till it appeared. Sufficient for the moment that he had received from them a boon that had never fallen to his lot before—civil treatment, and thanks for services rendered—and he intended to return it by every means that lay in his power. Accordingly he sat now grasping the tiller, steering the cutter on to a far-away point of Jura, and not till he had rounded the northern shoal at the entrance to Lowlandman's Bay did he wake his companions.

A couple of short tacks brought them up to an anchorage, and having made all snug, they hauled the boat up along-side, slung the dead sheep into it, and prepared to go ashore.

As they were shoving off O'Neill gave a joyous exclamation.

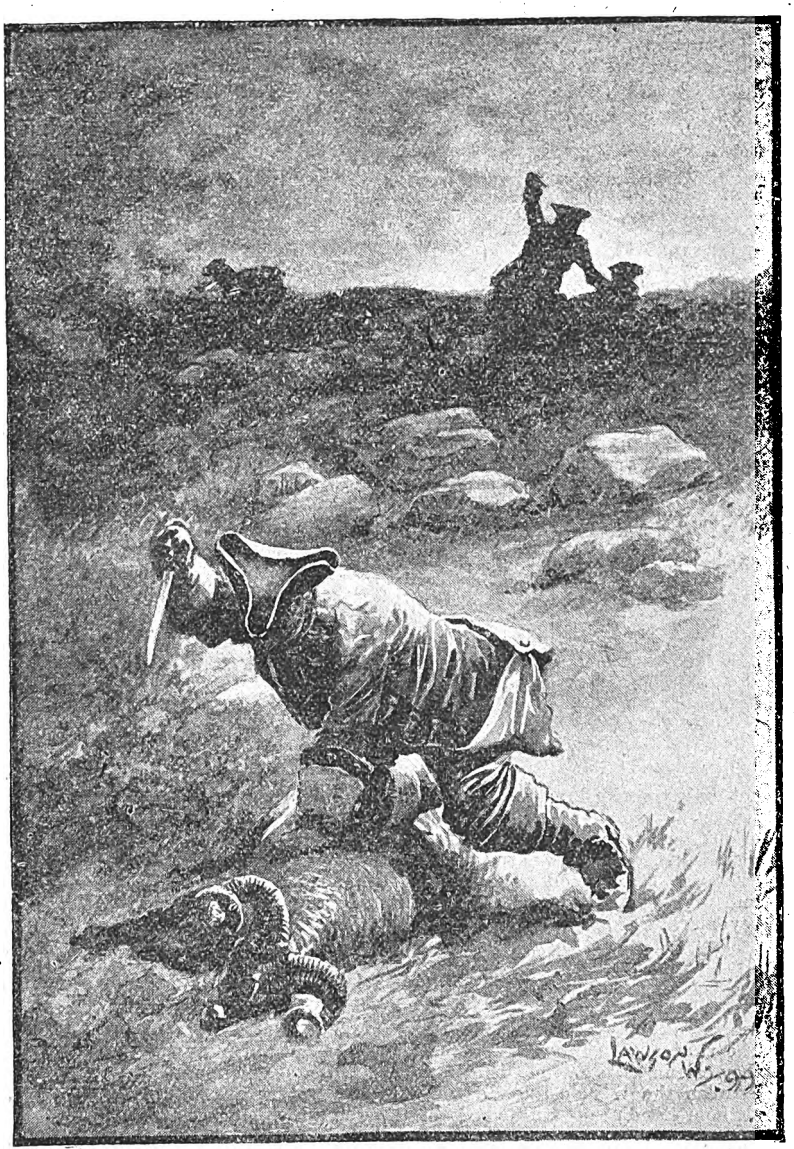
"Yer honour," he cried, "luck's for us. Look there! on the shore fornenst yez. See that drift timber an' them barrels? It's the wreckage of some craft that the tide has sent in to the bay. No smoking of the mutton now till it's as dhry as a leathern scabbard. We can bile out our brine, an' salt it down in the tubs like Christians."

On inspection, the casks proved little the worse for their knocking about. One was certainly smashed by the rocks irretrievably. But three were as good as new, and four others, which had a stave or two started, were not beyond the efforts of an amateur cooper, and by dint of a little labour were soon made sound again.

The first thing done on landing was to light a fire. The iron pot was set on this, and Sandy was placed in charge, with instruction to replenish it with sea water as fast as the contents steamed away. At long intervals it was allowed to boil dry, and the resulting saline matter was put carefully on one side, and the operation continued as before.

Whilst the boy was thus engaged, the other two were busying themselves with the carcasses of the sheep. They had to be hung up, skinned, eviscerated, washed. The hearts, kidneys, livers, were reserved for immediate consumption. The rest was jointed up, rubbed thoroughly with the salt, and spread out on a huge flat stone. Every day for a week was the salt rubbed in afresh, and then the meat was packed away in three of the casks, which it just filled. The other three casks, and the one they had already on board, were filled with fresh water, and all were lashed securely to prevent them shifting in a sea-way. A score of goodly faggots of wood were added to supplement the peats already on board; and with them the storing of the little vessel was completed.

These operations occupied, as I have hinted, a week. During them, all hands were fully employed. After the first burst of work—getting the meat into shape for the salting, and so on—Sneyd did all the shore duties. He collected fuel, attended to the fire and the pot, and rubbed in salt when it was necessary to do so. O'Neill stayed on board the cutter, and gave her sails, standing and running rigging, and in fact almost every part of her, a thorough overhaul; a piece of attention which she had apparently stood in need of for some time past. Her canvas was old, thin, and stained into countless hues by mildew. It was patched in several places, and rent sorely in others. Her standing rigging was bleached and weather-worn. Her running rigging was flattened in the strand, and in many places perilously frayed. The store of lumber in the little hutch forward offered a varied selection of articles; but little was of any use. The ropes there had for the most part been discarded years ago as useless, and the scraps of canvas were one and all extremely rotten. But the Irishman was handy and contriving, and with palm and needle, marline-spike and spunyarn, he did wonders. The upper fabric of the little craft was rejuvenated under his clever fingers, and at the end of the week her gear was almost as sound as if it had just left the rigger's hand, and her canvas as serviceable as though it had but that day come out of



The dirk did its work.

the sailmaker's loft. Sandy Carmichael, too, was not idle during this busy time. When his services were dispensed with as stoker to the salt-kettle, he betook himself to the old boat (which had been towed down thus far), and providing himself with hooks, lines, and shell-fish for bait, sculled himself to various points of the bay, which instinct or experience told him were suitable for the purpose, and periodically brought back a store of dabs, whiting, gurnet, and codling, which

Sandy was placed in charge.

not only gratified present consumption, but when split, sun-dried, and slightly smoked, offered a pleasant change of diet for the future.

In fact, the cutter was fully fitted out save for chart and compass. O'Neill had made a lead-line, and a log-ship and line; but the two other necessaries to navigation were beyond his scope. Neither grew on Jura, and it was useless to expect them there. They must be obtained elsewhere if at all.

So, at four o'clock one morning, when the flood tide had just commenced to run, they got their anchor, and after beating out of the harbour, set a course for Rathlin Island. The tide, what there was of it, was against them then, but they calculated that the cutter would get into the channel between the Irish coast and the Mull of Cantyre in the six hours, and so get full benefit of the ebb, which courses past the Mull at a great rate.*

Keeping in mid-channel for awhile, so as to avoid the Maidens rocks, they held on down the North Channel, with intention of picking up the Isle of Man. Here, if they could not do so before, they might hope to purchase the necessary compass; though they could be by no means sure of doing it, for the islanders then spoke their own language, and had but little intercourse with the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland. However, as it turned out, there was no need to make a landing. Traffic was not so plentiful in those days as it is now, and the craft they sighted even at a distance were few. The first vessel that came within hail of them they let pass without speaking. She had compasses on board, spare ones too, and charts galore, but they had the best possible reason to let her go her ways without trying to beg, borrow, buy, or steal anything of or at all belonging to her. She happened to be a King's ship; comparatively harmless-looking now, with bristling array of artillery hidden behind the closed gun-ports, and her long black hull neatly edged with snowy hammock cloths.

She came up after them hand-over-fist, close-hauled on the starboard tack, shouldering the waves aside with her bluff black bow in a pother of yeasty surge, and doing her good six knots an hour. She sweltered up alongside, bowing majestically over the larger seas, and disdaining to notice the smaller ones; everything spick-and-span, from maintruck to waterline, from the freshly-painted boats in davits to the nettings which hedged in her heavy tops. As she drew ahead and brought her gilded quarter galleries into view, the crew of the little cutter saw a couple of smartly-dressed officers leaning over a rail, and evidently discussing them; but the topic did not hold its interest long, for after a momentary glance they turned their heads away and began to talk of something else. The little half-decked-boat, with its dingy, weather-stained sails and gear, and its unkempt crew, were beneath more than a passing notice; and their mission could have no interest for so great a swell as a King's officer.

No, there was little fear that the frigate would heave-to and send a boat to examine their papers; the little craft was "too insignificant to contain treason." But for all that her crew were not sorry to see the white-sailed, heavily-sparred fabric draw further and further ahead, and finally dive hull down, and then deeper still, over the horizon.

Before the man-of-war ran out of view another sail hove in sight, coming from the southward. She was a vessel of a very different class; a little snow (or, as we say now, brig), born some time early in the seventeenth century, with lofty poop, low waist, and a great beak protruding from her square, tall bow. Her foremast was stepped right up in the eyes of her, and her bowsprit raked out at an angle which approached the perpendicular. She was running up channel with the wind free; yawing wildly, although there was but little sea on; and weltering about, till, from the foam around, one might well have likened her to a whale at play.

She came plunging along, her stained and patched old courses and topsails bellying out like dirty streaked half oranges to the fair wind, and the spritsail under her bowsprit dashing into every sixth or seventh sea which passed beneath her. The cutter approached, close-hauled. A man in a dingy red nightcap was standing on the snow's lofty poop with one hand on the tiller, and the other clutching the weather tiller rope. Straddle-legged beside him was a short, pot-bellied man, with a fierce-looking red face and an enormous purple bottle-nose.

The cutter slid by, and then, putting up her helm and easing out her sheets, ran back again. The red-faced man saw this manœuvre, came aft, and leant over the taffrail. "Cutter ahoy!" he bawled; "what cutter's that?"

"Cutter *Lawful Prize*, in ballast," shouted O'Neill in response, at Sneyd's desire. "Lawrence, master. Twelve days out of Ballachuilish. Bound for Brest av we can make it. What ship's that?"

"Snow *Biddy* of Watherford, laden wud spuds for Glaisca'. Twenty-foive days out of Watherford. Pathrick Muldoon, master. What is it y'are afther?"

"Afther speaking yez, avic," replied O'Neill, edging closer away into the snow's wake.

"It's meself that 'ud ruyther see yez haul away on to yer own coorse again," grumbled he of the bottle-nose. "Ahoy there! sphake what yez want to say now, and don't come any closer. 'Tis the narvous man I am meself wud strangers."

"There isn't a hair of the venerable head of yez I'd harm," responded O'Neill.

The bottle-nosed man turned sharply round. "Forrard there!" he bawled; "cast loose them two brass patareroes an' run 'em out; they be loaded; and stand by wud a hot bacca-pipe. Now then, ye spalpeens," he continued, turning round again, "if yez sheer up alongside, be all the saints, I'll blow yez out of the wather."

* In southerly gales, this race attains the velocity of five knots and upwards.—*Pilot Book.*

"Arrah now, honest man, be raysonable," said O'Neill. "Is it picaroons yez take us for, here under the lee of ancient Oireland?—Hoist that main-tack there, Sandy, or we'll be shootin' past him.—It's in disthress we are, or it isn't me that 'ud be botherin' yez."

"Av it's wather ye're wantin'," growled the bottle-nosed skipper, "I can't help yez. The winds has been bafflin', an' I'm that long out o' port I'm on short rations meself. Run into Belfast loch, an' get yer casks filled there."

"'Tisn't wather we want, Capt'n dear, nor grog neither; ptaise be, we've lashin's o' both. It's a compass we was wantin' to trade from yez, an' a bit chart, if yez had such a thing to spare."

"What's that?" bawled the bottle-nosed man; "put to sea widout a compass, that looks queer. Forrard there! stand by with that hot bacca-pipe. Cutter ahoy! kape her aisy as she's goin', av yez value yer skins."

"Set taut the weather toppin'-lift, yer honour," whispered O'Neill; "an' do you, Sandy, just start them peak-halyards. 'Tis hard to keep her back aqual to that sluggish ould haystack."—Then, aloud: "'Tisn't meself that likes to tell yez quite how it came about. Ye see we had a bit of a misfortune—But yez have such a hape of bhoys there forrard listenin', that I hardly like to sphake."

"Never mind them," bawled back the bottle-nosed skipper, in more amicable tones. "They're honest lads all when it comes to bearin' a hand to a fellow-crittur in disthress. But tell me, what is't ye've done?"

"It's the whole of the King's army, an' the half of his navy, we have afther us," quoth O'Neill, with many mysterious signs. "There's been a big battle fought in the North—by Inverness—an' his honour here was one of the Prince's right hand men."

"Ach, why didn't yez say so before? an' here's me, wud an ownly brother that carried a pike for him, just dyin' for the news. Just mind yourself, while I heave the snow to, an' then come aboard as fast as yez like."

O'Neill put up his helm, jibed, ran away for a cable's length, and then hove to, with his staysail-sheet a-weather.

The snow came far more slowly head to wind, clewing up her courses as she did so; but finally, after much splashing and wallowing and bustle, she was brought up stationary under a backed maintopsail. Four minutes afterwards saw the cutter alongside, her crew on the snow's deck, and their craft passed away astern at the end of a stout warp.

The bottle-nosed master welcomed them with effusion, and marched the three of them off to his cabin, which was entered by a low, narrow door in the break of the poop. It was an evil-smelling little den, and warmth was evidently more aimed at than ventilation. A broad locker ran along the sides, and a fixed oak table was in the middle. All seated themselves, and the host produced a demijohn of delf, and four tin mugs. "That's good honest potheen," he said, "and there's a pitcher of water on the flure for anybody that likes to mix. An' now for the yarn, av yez plaze; for it's just dyin' I am to hear what's befallen."

The story of the Prince's march northwards from Cheshire was told with all amplitude of details; and though neither Sneyd nor O'Neill knew that doughty pikeman the skipper's brother, and so could give no tidings of his probable welfare, their worthy host seemed in nowise disturbed.

"Andy Muldoon's all right, yer honour, we may lay to that. He'd be as bad to kill as an eel. Yez might cut him in two and flay the hide off him, but the bits 'ud be as lively as ever. Yer honour's shyin' at the whiskey and drownin' yer dhrink wid wather. Be advised by an ould sayman an' take it 'nate, an' sorra spasm'll yez ever have in the stomach after."

Apparently Mr. Pat Muldoon had been following his own prescription, if a nose is any measure of one's potations. But Sneyd declined to try it.

"You forget I'm English," said he, "and we in our country are not great drinkers of strong waters. Beer is our national beverage, and we stick to it for the most part; drink some foreign wines, but not so much; and scarcely ever touch usquebaugh, or, what you Irish and Scots swear by, whisky."

"Well, yer honour, every man to his own dhrink, but may the saints be good to the bhoy that first made whisky. An' that's a toast that no Fermanagh man, let alone one from County Watherford, would refuse." He and O'Neill emptied their mugs, and then he continued, "It's sorry I am, yer honour, that I'm not headin' to the s'uthard, or 'tis the proud man I'd be to take yez aboard the ould *Biddy*. But that's a nate little craft yez have astern, an' a good say-boat too, I'll take me davy; an' it's to Brest she'll be takin' yez before ye might get turned round and see where yez are."

"Arrah now, Patsey Muldoon, don't be afther blarneying us. It's yerself that knows we'll have the devil's own work to keep her goin' av it comes on to blow, or gets at all thick. How did yez suppose we could steer a straight line? Shoot a pisthol-shot over the bows and follow the shmoke?"

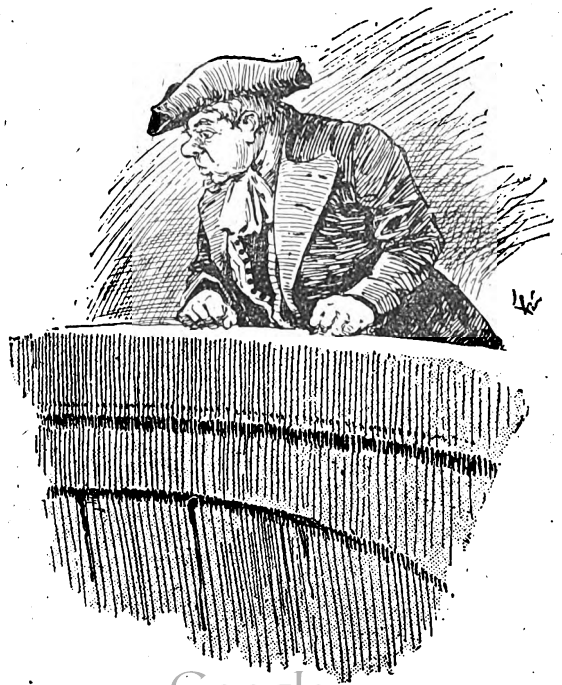
"Begob, I forgot," exclaimed the bottle-nosed man. "Yez haven't a compass aboard. There's a little gem in the locker there under the gorsoon. Get up, Sandy, me honey, lift the lid an' hand me out the wee oak box. That's it. There we are. There's a compass for a say-way now. Give it a jolt up occasionally, and it'll not vary a couple of points. On deck there, Tommy!"

"Sor?" said he of the red nightcap, lifting the skylight, and presenting an extremely dirty face.

"Get one of our wee lanthorns, an' a flask o' oil."

"Lanthorn an' oil it is, sor," said Tommy, disappearing.

"Now, that's well so far," continued the skipper; "but to a chart I can't help yez. Haven't one aboard o' me—couldn't use it if I had. Don't believe in charts meself.



The red-faced man . . . leant over the taffrail.

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Gimme log-ship and lead-line; and, wud them an' me compass, I'd find me way anywhere I been before."

"So'd I, dacent man, for that matter," rejoined O'Neill, "but never having been to any of the French ports in me life, I can't quite tell how they lie. An' just knowing the names don't help one."

"Thrue for yez, thrue for yez," replied Muldoon, rubbing his great nose perplexedly. "Yez could find yer way down to Land's End aisy enough by keepin' wudin shmell o' the land, and by aid o' a few thriflin' sailin' directions that I'll be givin' yez presently: but 'tis a good step across from there to Brest. However, I can give yez bearings, an' distances, an' tell yez what yer landfalls ought to be like. But, first of all, have yez a good memory?"

"Me memory houlds things," said O'Neill, "just like a basket houlds wather."

"That's bad," replied the skipper. "Well, I must repate an' repate till yez have it all be heart."

"Stay a moment," interrupted Sneyd. "Have you any writing materials on board? If we had the instructions down in black and white, there would be no chance of forgetting them."

"There's an inkhorn," replied the bottle-nosed man thoughtfully, "an' there's a goose-quill or two, I know; but whether there's a scrap of paper, that I can't say. —On deck there! Tommy!"

"Sor?" said Tommy, putting dirty face and red nightcap to the open skylight.

"Get me some writing-paper, quick."

"Writing-paper it is, sor," replied Tommy, withdrawing his head. Two minutes afterwards he knocked at the cabin door and coming in said, "Writing-paper, sor," clapped half-a-dozen odd scraps of not over-clean paper on to the table, and retired. Muldoon had produced a dusty inkhorn and quills, and Sneyd quickly fashioned one of the latter into a pen, and stood ready to take notes. The bottle-nosed man's information was astonishingly complete and accurate. He gave landmarks, told of rocks, shoals, and races, and related every item that could possibly be of use along the course to Brest. But as retailing these would be remarkably like giving a lengthy—a very lengthy—quotation out of a modern pilot-book, with just a few details such as those of lights and buoys omitted, I shall forbear.

The instructions took fully three hours, and, at their conclusion, Muldoon hailed again, "On deck there! Tommy!"

"Sor?" said he of the dirty face and nightcap, appearing as usual.

"Biled junk an' spuds, and look lively."

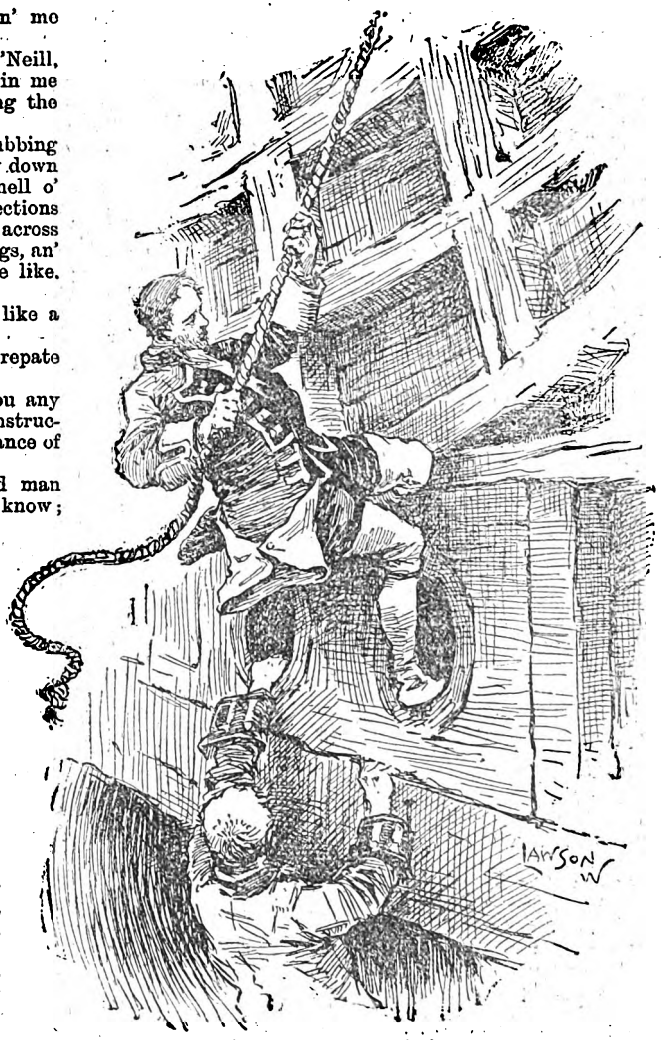
"Junk an' spuds it is, sor," replied Tommy, shutting down the skylight, and going his ways, to arrive ten minutes afterwards with two steaming tin dishes. Wooden platters were produced from a locker; each used his own knife; and forks there were none. But the viands did not stay long untouched. Healthy sea-appetites do not need much coaxing.

At its conclusion, they drank a parting cup, and went on deck. Sneyd, as delicately as he could, offered payment for the compass, but as it was refused indignantly, he was tactful enough not to press the matter further, but gave a couple of guineas from his slender store to be shared amongst the crew. Then they hauled their little cutter alongside, boarded her, and shoved off. The two craft parted, exchanging cheers, and in a couple of hours' time had lost sight of one another for ever.

But that's the way at sea.

* * * * *

The little cutter held on her course a point or two east of south, intending to make Holyhead her first landfall, after which she was to hit off the northern cape of Cardigan Bay, and then bear across to St. David's Head at its southern extremity.



Each had clutched at some portion of the stranger's gear.

The crew was divided into two watches. O'Neill took one by himself, whilst Sneyd and the boy managed during the other. Sandy was a good steersman, but he was deficient in strength; and Sneyd, whose nautical knowledge was still in its embryonic state—though growing apace—was always ready when there was any heavy work to be done. In practice, he generally took the watch by himself, for Sandy was ship's cook, being accustomed to the limited appliances, and able to make the most of them. Of course, in heavy weather Sneyd and O'Neill stayed above the whole time; and as they invariably turned in "all standing," the one whose watch it was below was ready to present himself for duty at the first call.

As it turned out, the weather favoured them on the whole. There was one short, sharp gale, which they ran before under the tiny square sail; but the cutter shipped no green water, and the spray that boarded her was easily baled back again to its proper place.

This bit of a blow brought them abreast of St. David's Head by the time it moderated, and although a tidy sea was running, they were able to give her a single-reefed mainsail almost directly afterwards.

Wind soon dropped, and headed them, blowing from the

W.S.W.; and it bade fair to be a dead ratch, up to Land's End. But provisions and water were holding out well, and they stood sturdily on, fearing nothing. Once again they saw a King's cruiser; but, as before, she ignored them. She would very likely have overhauled a more pretentious craft; but she evidently thought that no Jacobite, worthy of the catching would deign to escape in such an unkempt-looking, half-open boat as theirs was.

One day, just before nightfall, they sighted land—it turned out to be Lundy Island; but that they did not know till afterwards, and as the weather came on thick with the darkness, they deemed it wisest to heave-to till it should clear again. Accordingly the mainsail was close reefed, and the sheet hauled amidships; the staysail-sheet put a-weather; and with the helm lashed as she liked it, the little craft lay head to the seas, riding over them like a duck.

Sandy took the first watch; O'Neill followed him for the next four hours, and went below without seeing any signs of the weather improving; and then Sneyd came out of the snug little forepeak, and scrambled aft to face the driving rain in his turn.

The night was so pitchy dark that it was impossible from where he sat to see beyond the mast. The hiss of the seas, as they ran along the clincher sides, sounded monotonously in his ears. The rain drove ceaselessly into his face. Sneyd wrapped himself closely in his military cloak, and wedged himself firmly into an angle. It was an unpleasant night, but he might as well take it philosophically. There was no particular danger to be apprehended. The cutter was not likely to broach-to, for it was not blowing at all hard, and the gear had been tested by much heavier weather.

Hour by hour his watch wore on; and, as the last of it passed away, he thought the night, if anything, grew clearer. The rain was certainly not so heavy as it had been, and overhead the sky was far less murky. With luck, he thought, they'd have a fine day on the morrow. He had just arrived at this idea, and had stood up to stretch himself—for keeping in one attitude had made him feel rather cramped—when a restlessness seized him which he could not account for. He peered eagerly into the darkness on all sides, but could distinguish nothing save the dim shapes of the rolling waves. He listened attentively, but could hear no sound except the incessant swishing of the seas, the occasional groan of a timber, or the ceaseless squeak of the blocks.

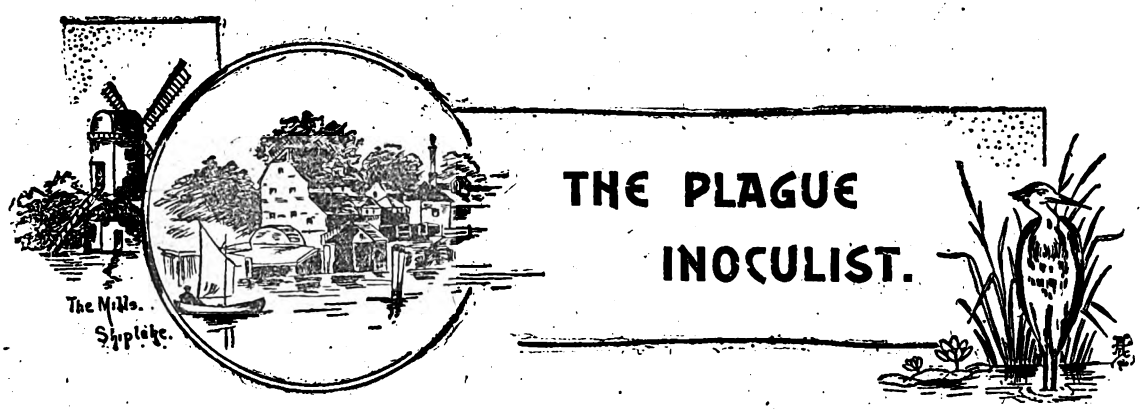
Then of a sudden a great shape loomed through the mist on the cutter's starboard beam, towering like some huge black phantom away on all sides into the darkness, and churning over the waves directly towards her.

Sneyd yelled like one possessed. "Up with your helm! Hard-a-larboard, for Heaven's sake!" and then rushed forward to call his companions on deck. They had awakened at the first alarm, and were coming through the hatch as he met them; first Sandy, then O'Neill.

"There's a big ship close aboard of us," exclaimed Sneyd, and, before the words were fairly out of his lips, the great solid beak which projected from the bows of the stranger rose to the lift of a sea, and crashed down on the little cutter just abaft 'midships, tearing through her slender fabric as though it had been so much paper.

No man could help his neighbour. It was *sauve qui peut*, and that in an instant of time. Directly she was struck, the cutter seemed to crumble into staves beneath their feet. Each had clutched at some portion of the stranger's gear, and found himself saved without knowing the fate of his comrades; and it was not till all three had been hauled up on deck by some sailors, who had run forward with ropes at the first alarm, that they thoroughly realised how they had got there.

(To be continued.)



"ONE hundred and ninety three have kicked the bucket," reported Harry O'Neil popping his head in at the open door.

"Won't you come in, man?"

"Thanks, Major, I think not! Might give you the plague." The Irish doctor's eyes twinkled merrily "One hundred and ninety three, remember."

"I'm not likely to forget it, O'Neil, any more than I am likely to forget Bombay. Confounded hole that it is!" cried Major Dothrington with a groan.

O'Neil having given his report, *vivâ voce*, proceeded to whistle blithely as he sauntered down the passage. He was an army medico, detailed on special service in the town to aid the Bombay doctors in their efforts to cope with the dread disease.

O'Neil had just left the bungalow when he was met by Harold Vermont, a doctor of exceptional skill, who practised but for love of his science.

"Ah, you, O'Neil! I thought I should find you here." He reined in his horse. "You're the very fellow I want to see. Can you spare me a moment?"

"Ten, if you like. I'm going to the town, will you accompany me?" inquired the Irishman, mounting his horse and dismissing the native who held it.

"Sorry, but I must see the Major. I'll go a little way along the road with you, though."

Vermont paused, then as the horses entered the Bombay road, said:

"O'Neil, I'm going to ask you a straight question. Will you give me a straight answer?"

"I never beat about the bush, Vermont," replied the Irishman with a smile.

Vermont hesitated, then said:

"What's your idea of the plague?"

"That it is exceptionally bad."

"You have no other idea regarding it?" Vermont glanced scrutinisingly at his companion.

"None."

"What is your idea as to its origin?"

"The native's innate love of dirt and the bad sanitation of the native quarter."

"That's just where you and all the other fellows have gone wrong."

"How?" O'Neil asked curiously.

"Have you ever paid particular attention to your patients' arms?" inquired Vermont.

"No, I can't say that I have. But what has this to do with the origin of the plague?"

"A good deal, only you don't know it," replied Vermont coolly. "Since this scourge commenced I have treated four hundred of its victims. On the right arm of two hundred and seventeen, slightly to the right of the triceps. I have observed a pustule, and on eighty others I have noticed it slightly above the deltoid."

"Well?" remarked O'Neil with a smile. "So far I see nothing remarkable."

"Wait a moment before going off at a tangent," exclaimed Vermont. "It struck me as odd that one particular pustule should always be met with in one particular spot, and that the patient possessing such a pustule would never suffer so acutely as those who did not. Therefore I minutely examined the mystifying spot on one patient. It was then that I was able to discover the origin of this outbreak. Not only one patient did I examine after that, O'Neil, but everyone who had a pustule situated as I tell you, and everyone bore out the truth of my conclusion."

O'Neil reined in his horse, a flush of interest suffusing his sunburnt cheeks.

"What was your conclusion" he cried almost peremptorily.

"That each pustule covered a scar which could be caused by nothing but a hypodermic syringe."

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated O'Neil, horror-struck. "Then the origin of the plague——"

"Was by the inoculation of sundry persons with the plague lymph."

The Irishman held out his hand.

"Vermont," he exclaimed, "you are a young man, and I an old one. You are a doctor because medicine is your hobby; I am one so as to be able to make both ends meet. You have made a discovery which I never dreamt of, and I congratulate you on it. Vermont, you are a clever fellow."

"It was luck and a little observation," replied Vermont modestly, grasping the outstretched hand. "Having now expounded to you the cause of the appearance of the plague, I will advance my theory as to how it was propagated. Of late—by that I mean within the last eighteen months—there has been great unrest among the natives, trees have been smeared white as in the days preceding the Mutiny, a spirit of coming evil has oppressed most of us, and, lastly, the fakirs have been active. This plague, O'Neil, in my mind, has been originated by a fanatic."

"It is a very likely hypothesis," replied the Irishman. "Well?"

"That is all. I'd like to see you this evening, to chat over this affair. I have to see the Major and it's late now. Come to dinner, will you?"

"Thanks, I will," replied O'Neil genially. Then added admiringly, as he watched Vermont canter away in the direction of the Major's bungalow: "That fellow has a future before him—if only he went in for medicine professionally."

True to his promise, the Irish doctor arrived at Vermont's bungalow at six, in time for dinner, but the young Englishman had not returned all day; therefore, O'Neil decided to await his return on the verandah.

The time passed slowly, till midnight boomed out from the city.

Seriously alarmed, the doctor rode through the silent streets to headquarters, inquiring after Vermont. They had not seen him since ten in the morning, when he had left to go to Major Dothrington's.

With a vague foreboding of evil O'Neil retraced his way to Vermont's bungalow, had a horse saddled and, accompanied by a native servant, clattered along the road to the Major's.

The young doctor had not been seen there since the afternoon. He had had tiffin and left somewhat about three, riding in the direction of the Western Ghauts.

With a heavy heart O'Neil turned his horse's head in this new direction and galloped along the road accompanied by the Major and Vermont's man.

The trail was easy to follow, as most of the villagers and hut-dwellers had seen him pass.

Meanwhile, Harold Vermont, after leaving the Major, had blissfully forgotten the invitation he had given O'Neil, and, forgetting, had ridden towards the Western Ghauts and stopped in front of one of the grotto-like caves which riddled the mountain side.

It was about seven when he reached his destination. Dismounting, he put his arm through the reins and whistled softly.

A beautiful young girl of some twenty summers appeared in answer to the call, and with a glad cry flung herself into his arms.

"Verda! My darling!" he cried rapturously, kissing her passionately. "It seems a year since I saw you last, though it was only yesterday."

"And to me it seems as if I had lived a lifetime," she replied. "You are late, my love—"

"Ah! Only an hour and that was not by my fault! I was speaking to the Major Sahib of the best way in which to quell this scourge."

She twined her arms around his neck and raised her soft eyes to his.

"I feared some ill had befallen you, or——" She hesitated a moment, then continued: "Or that some beautiful mem-sahib had charmed you. Oh, Harold—the women of your nation are so beautiful!"

"Do you think so?" he cried gaily. "For me, however, there is but one beautiful woman in the universe—and her name is Verda of the Ghauts."

"Oh, Harold, if I were to lose your love!" she cried impulsively; then added: "My father has arrived at last."

"Ah, this is good news; is it not, my love?" exclaimed Harold. "A fakir of some note, is he not?"

"Of some note?" She glanced questioningly at Vermont; then added almost reverently: "In India he is known as the Fakir of Fakirs."

"You must present me to your father. I am eager to see him!"

Leading him into the cavern, she halted before a low-burning fire, on the further side of which, dimly outlined

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in the surrounding gloom, sat a tall, gaunt Hindoo, asceticism stamped on every feature.

"My father," said Verda gently, "behold the Englishman I have already spoken about."

The gaunt native sprang to his feet and earnestly scanned the features of the stranger. Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he drew a deep breath, then exclaimed:

"So *you* are the Feringhee whom my daughter loves! I know your face as belonging to the man who has done much to stay the ravages of the plague at Bombay. Your skill is great in medicine—yet it is useless to pit it against the Divine will. Verda, leave us alone. I have much to say to this Englishman, and he, I doubt not, desires to speak privately to me."

Verda glanced questioningly at her lover.

"Your father is correct," he replied gently, "Go, Verda, and wait for me outside till I can come to claim you."

Without a word she obeyed, leaving together the two men of so widely different races.

"Sit down, Feringhee," commanded the Fakir, setting the example. "I heard in Bombay to-day that you have solved the cause of the outbreak of this scourge. What is it?"

"I see no reason why I should hide it! I attribute this plague primarily to inoculation."

The Fakir started, his eyes glittering.

"Ah! A good hypothesis, perhaps!" he muttered. "Tell me, Feringhee, having in your own mind solved an important problem, what will be your next step?"

The Fakir's eyes gleamed wildly beneath his shaggy eyebrows.

"I shall proceed to run the inoculist to earth."

"Ah!" The Fakir passed his hand over his shaven crown.

"A worthy resolve, but hard of accomplishment! But to change the topic; Stranger, you, I believe, love my daughter Verda?"

"Passionately!" exclaimed Vermont impulsively.

The Fakir laughed sardonically.

"Of course," he remarked stridently. "We all love passionately before marriage—and hate afterwards."

"Perhaps you were unfortunate in that respect."

"I?" The Fakir rose. "My wife died thirteen months after I married her; I had not time to hate. You desire to marry Verda?"

"You have guessed my heart's desire."

"Then know that I refuse——"

"I don't care if you do!" cried Vermont angrily. "By Heaven, I don't! Neither you nor anyone else shall separate us, for we will marry with or without your consent!"

The Fakir listened with an amused smile to the young Englishman's outburst.

"You lack courtesy," he remarked coldly. "I had not finished my sentence. With your permission I will repeat it. I refuse to permit you to marry her unless you promise to renounce your scheme of running this inoculist to earth."

"I can promise that, for I can tell others his name and leave to them the honour of tracking him!"

"You know his name? What is it?"

"Rahajat the Fakir,"

The Hindoo staggered, and placed his hand in his dress.

"Are you ill?" asked Vermont in an anxious tone.

"No! No! It is only a heart spasm. I am better now." The Fakir laughed discordantly. "Feringhee, you are a clever man, and, unlike your brother Englishmen, are correct."

"How do you know that the Fakir is the inoculist?" queried Vermont, surprised.

"Because I am Rahajat the Fakir!" shouted the other, springing at the astounded Vermont with a hypodermic syringe in his hand. "Your discovery is too weighty a one to be entrusted to such an addlepate as you!".

The young doctor's surprise was but momentary, for, realising the peril he ran of being inoculated, he seized the Fakir's wrists and called all his strength into play.

Inch by inch Vermont pressed the Fakir's hand towards his own breast, and despite the lithe Hindoo's frenzied resistance, pressed till the needle of the syringe penetrated the dusky skin.

With a scream of fear the Fakir felt the puncture, thrice repeated, then Vermont, releasing Rahajat suddenly, struck him a violent blow between the eyes which felled him, stunned and bleeding, to the ground.

Striking a match he surveyed the prostrate Fakir with a smile of satisfaction.

"The virus has begun to take effect!" Vermont remarked grimly. "I can see that by the punctures. The lymph is strangely virulent, so much so indeed that two hours will see him out of his misery."

He approached the cavern mouth, leaving the darkness behind him, to find Verda waiting for him.

"You are mine for ever, darling!" he cried joyfully. "We must escape. Your father is stricken with the plague."

"Then my duty is to nurse him."

For sole answer, Vermont mounted his horse, and, seizing Verda, placed her before him on the saddle and galloped away, to fall in with Major Dothrington and Doctor O'Neil four hours later.

Calling them on one side he briefly explained what had occurred.

"By Jove, man, you deserve a medal!" exclaimed the cheery Major enthusiastically. Then his face clouded. "But you won't get a thing, I suppose, for the Government daren't take any notice of this affair. I should cut India, if I were you, for once the natives get wind that you inoculated Rahajat, their most sacred of sacred Fakirs—well——"

"I don't want any more reward than what I have already!"

"What's that—the girl?"

"Yes, Major—my future wife."

The following day the great plague's register showed a decrease of fifty victims.

TRISTAM MONCK.

"WHY does that man keep watching me all the time?"

"Perhaps it's because he wonders why you're staring at him!"

BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN: "I have here a little poem: the only one I ever wrote."

Over-Sensitive Editor: "Then, my dear madam, I haven't the heart to take it from you."

QUIZZEL: "What will you give your girl on New Year's Day?"

Sharpleigh: "Well, that depends. If she says 'Yes,' New Year's Eve, I shall give her a seal-skin sacque; if she says 'No,' I suppose I shall have to let her give me the sack."

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A DINNER-TABLE DAYDREAM.

We were a large, jolly party, who had now been staying at the country house of my old friend, Charlie Whistler, for three days. I need not tell you who we all were; suffice it to say that I am Jack Tatham, and that my interest in this visit was centred in one of the other guests—Miss Vera Majoribanks.

Our hostess had the tact and good-natured consideration of her friends' wishes to send the object of my interest down to dinner under my especial care; and it can easily be imagined that, such being the case, all arrangements for our entertainment during the next two hours seemed perfect to me. The lighting of the table more especially so, since it all appeared to proceed from the brilliant light in my fair neighbour's blue eyes, and to be reflected in the exquisite diamonds on her snowy neck and arms.

Our conversation had gone on during three courses with no more interruption than the occasional attentions to the rest of the party which courtesy demands; when I became aware that Miss Majoribanks was no longer listening to me—or, indeed to anybody or anything. Her eyes were fixed with an expression of terror on the face of a servant, who was handing a plate to an old lady exactly opposite. There was nothing in the man's appearance to cause such fear as her face and even her attitude expressed. He was a pale-faced, morose looking man, with straight black hair, and small eyes. I did not remember having seen him on my last visit, six months ago, so concluded he was a servant who had not been there long. These thoughts did not occupy a moment, and the next I bent over Miss Majoribanks and asked:

"Are you cold—or perhaps not well? You look so pale and wretched."

She started, and turned to me as if just awaking from a dream, and answered:

"Yes, I am cold, I was shivering at thoughts which came into my head when I saw that man opposite to us."

"It was so exact," she continued. "Just the same small gleaming eyes, the same black hair, only—I thought it was covered by a woman's cap. Ah! is it a dream, or how do I know it all?"

I thought she was a little upset; though why, I knew not, and so I tried to calm her, and told her that dreams always went by contraries—for instance, that to dream of a death meant an approaching marriage. I tried to say this meaningly as well as encouragingly.

When she was more collected I pointed out to her that fewer servants were in the room now; her particular horror being one of the absentees.

"You must think me very silly," she said, blushing. "But I still feel that I have seen that man before, and I must tell you all about it when we can talk quietly."

Soon after this the ladies left us, and it was some time later that we found ourselves settled in a shaded corner of the drawing-room for a quiet talk. I began by saying:—

"Now for the mystery! and I hope we shall be able to clear it up satisfactorily."

"I wish you could put it all out of my head," she said dreamily. "I know I shall never dare to go to bed to-night."

Then she began in hurried, excited tones to tell me what her impressions had been.

"I will tell you all I saw as soon as I caught that man's eyes," she said. "They seemed to me to be fixed on my diamonds, the man's face was bent over me with a greedy gleam in those small black eyes, while an awful, sharp, cruel knife was in his hand. Such a thing has never been told to me; oh, must it not mean that it is going to happen? Don't you think that dreams are sometimes sent as warnings?"

"But you do not know that you ever dreamt it," I said. "I think you must have read something of the kind, and you have allowed it to prey on your imagination."

"No, it is all connected with my diamonds; I saw the man's eyes attracted by them when we were at dinner, and it was that which led to the dream, or vision, or whatever it may be."

An idea occurred to me.

"Will you leave the diamonds in my care when you are not wearing them?" I said. "Then, if, as you say, the man's face and all its horrors are distinctly connected with them, he will trouble me, and you need not think of him any more. But wear them now until bed-time, so as to avoid drawing attention to what might have to be explained; and how could you explain all these vague doubts and suspicions, which to-morrow you will remember only as empty fancies?"

Then I added—

"If you are at all nervous I will sit up all night in the library, the side door of which is exactly opposite to the one door of the room you occupy. I can easily make an excuse for going there when the household settles for

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the night, and I promise you to remain there with that door open until morning."

Of course Miss Majoribanks replied with many thanks, that she would feel quite safe under such circumstances, but could not think of robbing me of my rest because of her foolish fancies. To which I responded by assuring her that the thought of her anxiety alone would be sufficient to keep me awake in any case—which argument was conclusive.

When bed-time arrived I gave her her candle, and she quietly put the diamonds into my hand; then said good-night with a shy, grateful look, which it is pleasant to remember.

We men-folks were not fond of late hours; and on this particular night we seemed more sleepily inclined than usual. So I was soon able to carry out my programme, saying I had some writing to do before the early post, and should probably burn the midnight oil in the library.

There I carried my rugs; and, having carefully turned down and shaded the lamp, I settled myself in an arm-chair near the door, but in such a position as not to be easily seen through it.

I imagine that I must have been sitting there about two hours, when I heard a soft step approaching from the hall. It came as far as the door opposite—and there stopped.

The lights were kept burning all night in the corridors, so I was able to distinguish the figure of one of the housemaids, as I supposed, taking coals to Miss Majoribanks room. But why should coals be needed at 2 a.m.? I knew how startled Miss Majoribanks would be by her entrance. Putting up the lamp while the servant's back was turned to me, and she intent upon opening the door quietly, I went into the corridor, and said:—

"Thank you, it was I who wanted the coals in the library. Bring them in, please."

The maid looked startled, as she well might, and did not seem as if she understood me; so I repeated:—

"In here, please," pointing to the library door. She then brought them in, rather sullenly I thought, and was going to put some on the fire, when I stopped her saying:—

"Leave the box there, please, and I will put them on as I need them."

There was nothing more to be said, and she withdrew, but not before I had noticed that her eyes were singularly like those of the man-servant who had caused such alarm; that her cap did not appear to sit on her head as a woman's cap should; and that her clothes did not look as if they were made for her square, masculine figure.

After thinking over this, something prompted me to examine the coal-scuttle which she had brought in; and there to my horror, if not to my surprise—under two or three of the larger coals was a knife. "awful, sharp, cruel!" as it had been described to me. Need I say how thankful I then was that I had prevented the coals being taken into the room for which they were intended.

The next morning I heard that one of the men-servants had obtained leave of absence that he might go to see his wife, the news of whose serious illness he had just received. He was gone before we were down, and I knew well how to interpret this, but determined to say nothing, and have since learnt—as I expected—that for some reason or other he never returned.

Miss Majoribanks now thinks that her fears were without the slightest foundation, and I try to appear as if I thought so too.

G. FENTON.

£50 OFFERED EVERY WEEK. £50

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses 50 envelopes to 50 people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign and locks them away in his private safe.

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and address it to the Editor under the following conditions: Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 14 distribution must reach us by January 9th, addressed to The 14th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of Distribution No. II.

Two of the fifty people selected to receive a sovereign this week have applied for it. They are:

Miss R. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

R. Groves, 3 Market Place, Waltham Abbey, Essex.

The unclaimed sovereigns were addressed to:

James Dixon, Hebburn Villa, Hebburn-on-Tyne; Mrs. Dalton, Palace Road, Ripon; Miss Anthony, 19 Caloy Place, Otley, Leeds; J. Cartwright, 13 Toon Street, Buxton; W. Griffiths, Wharf Street, Ellesmere, Shropshire; W. Phillips, 5 East Cross Street, Sunderland; J. H. Porter, Army Ordnance Corps, Ordnance Office, Harwich; R. Pugh, 14 King Street, Oswestry; E. Peake, 8 Bond Street, Swansea; C. Croeskill, 7 Oxford Street, Wellingborough; Miss Morice, 17 Edith Road, West Kensington; J. E. Hehir, 149 Upper Lewes Road, Brighton; F. Roberts, 8 Crickerfield Road, Clapton, N.E.; J. K. Engall, 1 Springfield Lodge, Springfield Road, Guildford; E. Beach, 3 Newchapel Road, Perry Hill, Catford; E. Jay, 12 Clwyd Street, New Brighton, Cheshire; W. J. Nagle, 17 North Street, Skibbereen, Ireland; S. Vincent, 19 Parthenia Road, Fulham, S.W.; A. Harris, 5 Frederick Street, Martin Street, Stratford; George Amos, Dovesford, Jedburgh, N.B.; J. Easton, 7 Bath Terrace, Blyth, Northumberland; A. B. Thomas, 1 Eaton Place, Llandaff; A. Smith, 51 Borton Road, Chorley, Lancs.; Mrs. Gear, 8 Woodstock Terrace, Ilfracombe; Miss Deane, Garden Cottage, Fingest, Henley-on-Thames; Charles Ibbot, Goldington, Bedford; Mrs. Cameron, Cairngower, Crieff, N.B.; T. Sale, 14 West Street, Hackney, N.E.; Charles Young, Rollesby, Yarmouth; John Mower, Little Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk; George Douglas, 174 High Street, Margate; W. Treby, 51 Lawrence Road, Southsea; O. Pemberton, Myrtle Cottage, Desborough, Sussex; Miss Dodd, 8 Eaton Road, West Kirby, Cheshire; H. Neale, Railway Inn, Church Street, Bromyard, Herefordshire; W. Fevin, St. Cleers, Somerton, Somerset; John Fowler, Aston, Avonmouth, Gloucestershire; J. Wilson, Dalston Road, Commersdale, Carlisle; Mrs. Parker, Walton Cottage, Chapel Hill, Ambleside; F. Orange, 104 Front Street, Arnold, Notts; A. Green, 38 Derby Road, Hinckley, Leicester; F. Joyce, Cromwell Place, St. Ives; W. G. Leigh, Bridge Street, Peterborough; J. Wells, 37 North Street, Hornsastle; J. Tailby, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield; Mrs. Kemp, High Street, Pershore; Miss Faulkner, George Street, Oxford; W. Kent, Tronance Farm, Newquay, Cornwall.

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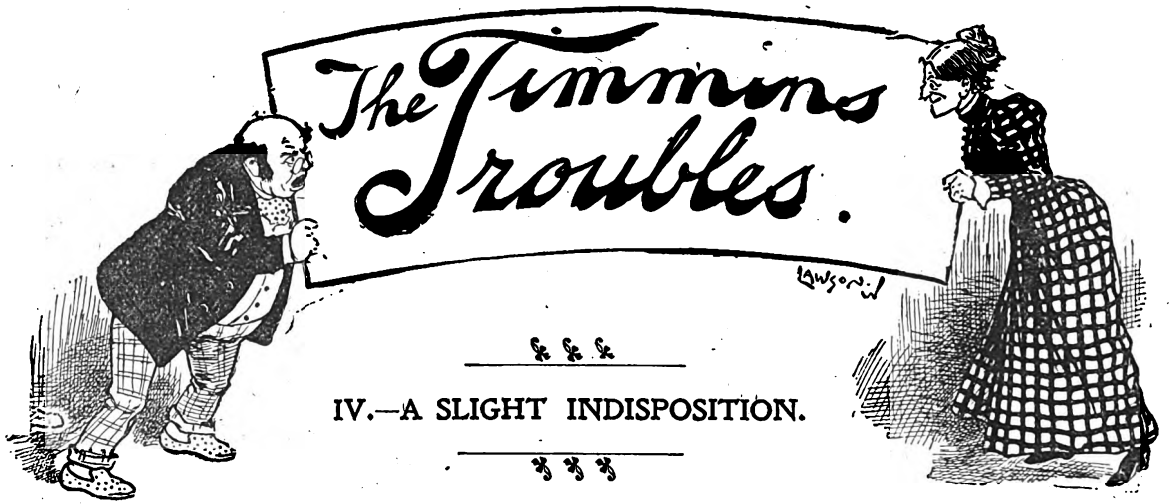


IV.—A SLIGHT INDISPOSITION.

"THAT'S better," groaned Mr. Timmins, as his wife arranged the cool pillows under his head. "Now I can die looking out upon the trees and the sky," and Mr. Timmins assumed a resigned expression of visage, and gazed out of the corner of his one eye upon a bare tree and half a dozen telegraph wires.

"Oh, you won't die," said Mrs. Timmins cheerfully. "You're only a little ill, and you'll get over it."

"That's all you know about it," snarled Mr. Timmins. "To hear you talk, one would think you only had to be fitted up with little beds and a smell of liniment to be a hospital. I'm very ill, I tell you, and I don't want any nonsense about it."

"Well, well," cooed Mrs. Timmins, "don't excite yourself. Keep quiet and you'll get well."

"Much you'd care!" muttered Mr. Timmins turning on his side and resting his cheek on his hand, an attitude generally assumed by martyred spirits on the approach of dissolution.

"Will you take your drops again, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins. "It's time for them."

"No, I won't. They're nasty. I haven't had anything but drops for a week. From the way you administer drops one would think you were the trap-door of a hanging machine. Give me some figs."

"But there are no figs, dear. I'll go and get you some," said Mrs. Timmins.

"That's it," growled her husband. "You only want an excuse to leave me to die alone. Why haven't you got some figs? You might know I'd want figs. Have you got any prunes?"

"No, I haven't any prunes, but I won't be more than a minute away, and I'll get you any fruit you want."

"Oh, yes. You'd get it, I've no doubt. What you want is a railing round you and a gate off the hinges to be an orchard. Fetch me some strawberries."

"Why, strawberries are out of season! There are none in the market."

"I supposed you'd say that," moaned Mr. Timmins. "You've always got some excuse. If I should die you'd have an apology ready. Give me something to take this taste out of my mouth."

"What would you like, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins.

"Soap, hang it all! give me soap, if you can't think of anything else," demanded Mr. Timmins. "May be you haven't got any soap. At least, you wouldn't have if I wanted it. Have you got any cherries?"

"No. They are out of season, too. There are some grapes in the cupboard."

"I don't want any grapes. If I can't have what I want I don't want it. Where are those drops? Why don't you give me my medicine? Are you going to let me die for want of a little attention? You want the life insurance, don't you?"

Mrs. Timmins ladled out the dose, half of which went down Mr. Timmins' gullet, and half over the front of his nightshirt.

"That's it," he howled. "Spill 'em. They're for external application, Put 'em anywhere. Pour 'em up the chimney," and Mr. Timmins hurled the spoon across the room.

"Have a piece of orange to take the taste away?" asked Mrs. Timmins pleasantly.

"No, I won't," objected her spouse. "Give me a piece of melon."

"I don't believe they have melons in December," sighed Mrs. Timmins.

"Of course they don't," reasoned Mr. Timmins. "They don't have anything when I'm ill. It's a wonder they have houses. It's a miracle that they have beds. I'm astounded to think they have doctors and chemists' shops. I've got to hurry up and die, or they won't have any undertakers, or coffins, or graves. Give me a piece of orange, will you? D'you suppose I'm going to lie here and live on the taste of those drops for a month?"

"You'd like these grapes," suggested his wife.

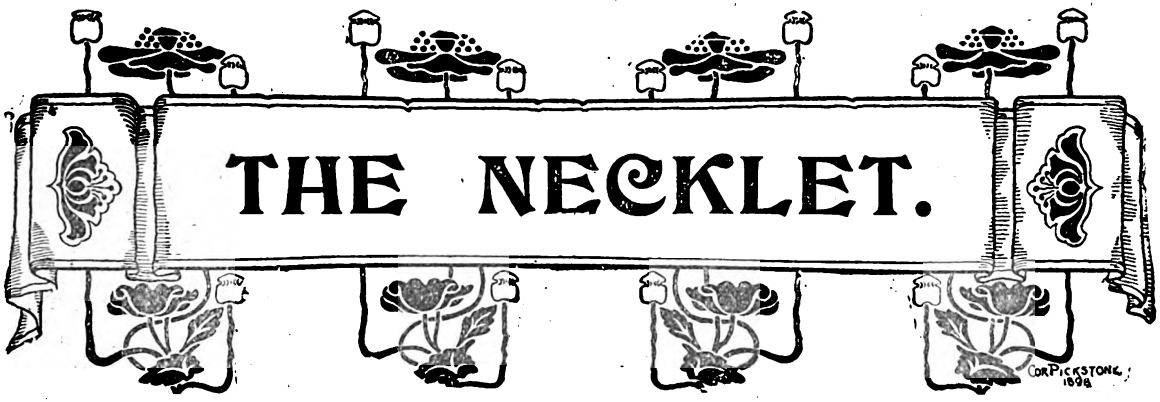
"No, I wouldn't either. What do you want me to eat 'em for? Have you got any interest in the grape trade? Who's paid you to make me eat them? One would think you only wanted a porch and four boys climbing over you to be a grape vine. Where's my pill?"

"You took your pill, dear," replied his patient wife.

"Oh, of course! A pill is out of season now. I can't even have a pill when I feel like it;" and Mr. Timmins groaned in spirit and looked dismal. "Now sit down and don't move. I want to sleep. Don't you make a bit of noise if you want me to live."

And Mrs. Timmins held her breath and never rustled a feather, while her husband lay and glared out of the window for an hour and a half.

THE NECKLET.



"WHAT right have you to accept a present from him?"

"Right!"

The girl's eyes flashed angrily as she arose from her recumbent attitude by the side of the old fishing boat and looked haughtily down upon the young fellow who uttered the words.

She was a pretty girl of nineteen. She was not handsome, but just pretty, and she knew it. As she stood defiantly before him—for he also had risen to his feet, slowly—with her flushed face, her white teeth just visible between her rosy lips, and her well-formed figure drawn to the full of its limited height of five feet, the pang of bitterness in Dick Burrell's heart was at first subdued by his admiration and then returned with double force. Jenny Raynes, whom he loved so passionately, was slipping away from him.

"Why haven't I a right to take a present from him?" asked Jenny, in the same angry tone and with a slight toss of the head. "Who has any right to stop me?"

"I—" began Dick, but the flash of her eye warned him, and he quickly turned the words. "Everybody knows that you are keeping company with me."

"Everybody knows that *you* have been trying to make love to me," she retorted, "but I am not bound to you, and I can take any presents I like!"

"He's playing with you, Jenny," Dick said doggedly. "It stands to reason that an artist gentleman don't want you, however pretty you are. You see, Jenny, you're a lot below him, being a servant—though you are as good as any lady. He gave you that gold necklet, and he's going to paint your portrait for some——"

"I won't listen to another word!" exclaimed Jenny Raynes. "You're jealous because you can't afford to give me things—because you are only a fisherman and egg hunter and not a gentleman, like him. I can please myself!"

And with another toss of the pretty head, she turned on her heel and left him.

Dick watched her until she had disappeared; then, with a heavy heart, he wended his way towards the town in another direction. He entered an inn where he was wont to take his daily half-pint, called for the drink and buried himself in a corner of the parlour to give himself up to bitter reflections.

He loved Jenny, but she was a wayward lassie and her head was turned by flattery. He had no tongue for polite compliments such as the gentry knew how to utter, but he loved her with deep affection and would have given his life to benefit her. His mother had told him that she would not make a fitting wife for him; she was too "flighty" and would never be a steady, contented woman until she had been sobered by some great trouble, so ran his mother's opinion. But Dick could not control the dictates of his heart and he—yes, he loved her. How would it——

"Hallo, Dick! You're the very man I am looking for."

Dick started as his reverie was thus broken. He looked up slowly, like a man returning to consciousness, and beheld the well-known form of Sergeant Samuel Silkins, of the West Police.

Silkins was a character in his way, and had several peculiarities. One of these was his fondness for alliteration in names; he had three children, each of whom had three names (including the surname) and all the names began with S. The eldest was Sophia Selina, the second was Susan Sarah, and the third, a boy and the hope of his heart, was Steven Scipio. The officer had always regretted that he himself had only two names, but on attaining the rank of sergeant he had become reconciled to the deficiency, since he could make up the three S's in that way. It is scarcely necessary to add that Silkins was an important personage in the town; but it may be well to mention it, so that you may treat him with due deference when you chance to visit Dexham.

"I think you can be of service to Her Majesty's Government, Dick," continued the Sergeant, dropping into a chair. "What's the matter with you, man?" he asked, as Dick remained silent.

"Nothing in particular," replied Burrell, rousing himself. "What do you want me to do, Sergeant?"

"I want you to look a little less like a funeral, for one thing," said Silkins. "Your mug's empty! Have another—it won't hurt you, man, and I'll pay for it."

When the ale had been brought in, Silkins cautiously closed the door and spoke in a low tone.

"We have been informed," he began in an impressive manner, "that a notorious individual has slipped away from London, and is probably somewhere along the coast in this direction. We have to keep our eyes open and report if we see anyone suspicious."

He leant back in his chair and glanced at Burrell.

"Well?" queried the latter indifferently.

"Now, *I* have my suspicions about that artist chap who has been here for the last three weeks. Been paying attention to Jenny Raynes, so I'm told. (Ah! That's woke him up!) Do *you* know what he is doing here?"

"No," replied Dick, with a little more animation. "What do you want me to do?"

"*Now* you're talking sensibly," remarked Silkins. "The long and the short of it is this: we want to know what he is up to, and I thought you could keep your eye on him or *get the information from someone.*"

"She don't know any more about him than you do," said Burrell, who at once grasped the meaning of Silkins' words. "She's lost her head because a man in fine clothes has spoken to her and"—he was going to say "given her a necklet," but he stopped.

"Oh!" said Silkins in a disappointed voice. "Then you can't help me?"

"I can keep a look-out, but I can't do any more," returned Dick. "Of course, if I see anything wrong I'll tell you."

The Sergeant tried in various ways to make Burrell take a more lively interest in the matter, using the words "Her Majesty's Government," in every other sentence, but without success.

They left the inn together and Silkins, finding that Dick was not particular whither he went, artfully walked with him, chatting on other subjects and guiding him away from his home towards a quieter part of Dexham. As they walked along an idea came to Silkins, a recollection which made him say hard things to himself for not having remembered it before.

"You ought to have been a detective, Dick; you'd stand more chance with a girl like Jenny if you had a year or so in the force and worked yourself up to be a plain clothes man. It smartens a man up so, you know. But, bless me! You *did* do a little in that line about a year ago, didn't you?"

"I put the police on the track of a gang of swindlers while I was in London for a couple of months. It's about a year ago," returned Burrell.

"Put them on the track!" exclaimed Silkins, drawing on his imagination. "Why I was told—from headquarters, you know—that it was really through you that they were nabbed! It broke up the Langley gang, for they were all sent to penal servitude except one, who nearly murdered the detective and was never caught. Why, you are the very man to help me, and I can't understand why you persist in saying you won't. You'd get all the credit."

Burrell was tired of the subject. He did not know whether to be pleased or vexed. He wanted to get rid of Silkins.

"Very well," he said wearily, "I'll do my best for you, and see if I can discover this fellow's little game. Now I must be off, Sergeant."

And although Silkins tried to detain him, Burrell shook hands with the great man and left him.

The two men went their ways unconscious of the fact that the latter portion of their conversation had been overheard. Neither had noticed that a man had been crouching near them under a low shed, his concealment having been assisted by the gathering gloom. He emerged into the open and gazed at the retreating figure of Dick Burrell.

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves, they say, and it is probably true," he muttered with an evil expression on his not unattractive features, "but they often hear something that is good for them to know. It is rather lucky that I dodged down when I saw them coming. I didn't want them to see me just here, but I certainly did not think of 'hearing something to my advantage,' as the legal advertisements say. H'm, so it was you, my young fisherman, eh? Very good!"

It was two days later when Dick Burrell went on his next egg-hunting expedition. On the previous afternoon he had seen Jenny and found her less inclined than ever to listen to him; he had left her with the remark that he was going egg-hunting over the Boverhyde Cliff on the following morning, and did not care if the rope broke and dropped him on the rocks below. At which she had laughed scornfully.

Dick thought of this laugh as he hung over the high cliff, sitting in the noose of his rope. At that moment he was suspended about twelve yards down the side of the cliff, steadying himself by placing his feet against it, while with both hands he was feeling in a hole for eggs. As the thought came to him, he stopped in his work and glanced at the rocks below. He could not repress a shudder at the idea of falling that distance on the jagged points rising from the sea.

"It would be a pleasant drop, eh?"

The air was still; there was scarcely a breath of wind; and the words came distinctly to his ear.

He turned his eyes upwards to the summit and saw the artist—his rival—standing by the stout bough to which he had attached his rope. A thrill of fear passed through Burrell's frame at the expression on the man's countenance; he felt instinctively that the intruder meant mischief.

"I am glad you told Jenny that you were coming here," continued Clarke, (that was the name he had given in Dexham). "It gave me the opportunity of having a little talk with you without fear of interruption. Don't attempt to climb up," he added warningly, "or I will cut the rope."

Suiting the action to the word, he drew out a pocket knife and laid the edge of the blade against the line.

"You——"

"Tut, tut!" Clarke broke in. "You will not help yourself by calling me names. Listen to what I have to say.

"I have a big score and two small ones to pay off, Mr. Richard Burrell; and, by the Lord Harry! I'm going to wipe the slate clean! Do you hear?"

"You coward!" cried Dick scornfully. "Let me come up, and fight it out with me like a man!"

The other smiled sardonically.

"And miss the sport? No! You are in league with that thick-headed policeman to spoil my game here; that is little score No. 1. You are trying to make Jenny throw me over; that's No. 2. Pretty girl isn't she? Sorry to disappoint you, but I require the little fool's assistance for the job I have on hand. But the big score is the one I am most anxious to pay off. So it was *you* who gave us away in London? I was one of the 'Langley gang,' and I had to nearly kill a man to escape. I swore that I would have revenge if I ever met you again. I can't imagine how it was that I didn't recognise you. But your appearance is different in those clothes, and I never heard your full name down here till two days ago."

Clarke tried the edge of the knife-blade on his thumb and continued:

"I am not of a forgiving disposition. I am going to send you to—well, I don't trouble much about such matters, so I'll leave you to imagine to which place you will go. But I intend to have a little sport.

"This rope has five strands apparently. I shall cut one strand at a time. You have about five minutes to pray before you go down below on the rocks. I must say that they do not look very tempting, but we cannot

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always pick and choose. I was obliged to take my lot as it came to me through you; the tables are now turned."

"I did my duty as it was shown to me by accident," replied Dick. He was pale, but he spoke quietly and evinced no sign of fear. If his last minutes had come, he would meet his death bravely, however terrible it might be. "Was it my fault that you were one of the evil-doers? I knew nothing of you."

"You know something about me now," said Clarke. "I owe it to you that I have to hide from justice, and now you are on my track again. I am on a job that will make me for life, and I don't intend to be foiled. It's very little I'll stop at; especially when I can have revenge at the same time! But we have wasted enough time; there goes one strand, so make a beginning with your prayers."

As he spoke the villain deliberately cut through one strand of the line upon which Dick's life depended.

Without moving his head, Dick turned his eyes along the face of the cliff in a vain endeavour to find some chance of escape. The ledge or hole in which he had been feeling was the only place to which he could clutch, but of what avail would that be? He could not hang there for more than a few minutes, even if he succeeded in clutching it before Clarke prevented him; for it was nearly three feet beyond his reach, and to get his hands on it he had to work himself along sideways with his feet. He had allowed himself to swing away from it when Clarke appeared. Clarke would certainly frustrate any such attempt by cutting the rope through at once.

"Two!" exclaimed the murderous rascal as he again made use of his knife. "I hope you are making good use of your time."

Dick seemed to feel the strand go, and a pang went through his heart. Was there no escape? Must he die like this? Again his eyes wandered over the face of the cliff, only to receive confirmation of the utter helplessness of his position.

"Three! Have you any message for Jenny? I shall be pleased to deliver your last dying wish, provided it is a proper one."

"You villain!" burst from Burrell's lips. The exclamation was wrung from him by the heartlessness of his murderer and by the thought of Jenny. He would willingly have died to benefit her, but his death at this time meant the loss of the only one who would take any interest in her well-being.

Clarke saw the agony in the upturned face and gloated over it.

"Four!"

He was hanging now by one strand. His mind was in a whirl; he could think of nothing. He was conscious that Clarke was speaking; he could not distinguish the words, but he perceived that he was being taunted. Then he distinctly heard the word:

"Five!"

Dick Burrell shut his eyes with an agonised groan and the name of Jenny on his lips. Down, down, down! Would it never end? Would he be dashed to a shapeless mass, or would Heaven miraculously save him to defeat the villainy of that man? These thoughts flashed through his brain, he knew not how. Then it seemed to him that he was not falling, that he heard voices above.

He opened his eyes and slowly raised them. Yes, he was still suspended by the rope and there were voices above. Some struggle was taking place. If he could climb the rope! Would it bear the strain?

In the meantime, what had occurred at the top of the cliff?

Jenny, impelled by some feeling which she could not define, had contrived to slip out and had made her way to the Boverhyde Cliff to see Dick. As she approached the spot where she expected to find her lover, she was surprised to see the form of Clarke bending over the cliff, supporting himself by clasping the bough with his left arm. Not suspecting anything wrong, she had walked up to the spot; her light steps made scarcely any noise, and Clarke was too engrossed to notice them.

She reached him just as he cut the fourth strand. She heard his taunting remarks. She was too horrified to act at once, and stood as if chained to the ground. The word "Five!" and the gleam of the blade in the sunlight aroused her to a knowledge of the situation; with a cry of horror and indignation she sprang forward and dragged his arm back with all her strength, which was increased for the time by her desperation.

Taken by surprise, Clarke was dragged right round and stumbled. When he saw who it was, he was nonplussed for a second; then he rushed at her with an oath and they struggled together on the turf. This was the sound that met Dick's ears.

Clarke dragged her to the edge; his face was convulsed with passion, and Jenny felt he would have no mercy Nearer and nearer. In her despair she mustered. strength enough to wrench her right hand free and threw it around the trunk. At that moment—she never knew how it happened—he stumbled, released her left arm in a frantic effort to save himself, and disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

Dick, looking up, saw the body rush past him and shuddered. He saw Jenny's agonised face as she bent over the edge and told him he was safe.

He began to climb up the rope, hand over hand, but he felt that it would not bear the strain. A few inches at a time he went up, his heart beating quickly, while Jenny watched him in suspense. The remaining strand was giving; it would not hold his weight long. If he sat still, he would soon be dashed to the rocks below; on the other hand he might succeed in reaching the top in time if he climbed carefully. It was an awful time of suspense, but Dick felt that he would not bear the strain long enough. He shouted to her, asking her to tie something round the rope under the cut so as to relieve the strain. He saw her look round helplessly for a second, then she hastily undid the chain from her neck, tied one end as he had suggested, and held it taut with her disengaged hand.

It was a delicate thing to look at, but it was good and strong, and it served the purpose. Dick climbed up cautiously until his hands were level with the turf, then he abandoned the rope and scrambled up with the assistance of Jenny.

Who can describe the joy of that meeting?

The affair caused a great sensation in Dexham. The excitement lasted more than the nine days, but it wore off gradually. The event was brought back to the minds of the inhabitants some weeks later by the marriage of Dick and Jenny and their departure for London, where the former had obtained a better situation.

And the necklet? Dick wanted to keep it, but, in spite of the part it had played in saving her lover, the sight of it was distasteful to Jenny. It was therefore decided to give it to some fund for the benefit of our fisher folk.

GEO. DAY.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER XLV. (*continued*).

THEY were now passing along the large public square in the centre of the city. The dense throng on either side their path pressed disorderly upon them and progress became slow and difficult. The intermittent growling that rumbled through the spectators reached the Tsar's ears and he spurred his horse on in anger.

At the same time the guards rode forward on either side to keep off the press, and beat the people back with their sabres. At this act of wanton cruelty a hoarse roar went up mingled with hisses and shouts of disloyalty. The spirit of the citizens, too long repressed, sought a vent, and in a moment a sullen crowd threatened to become a dangerous mob.

"Down with the Tsar!" suddenly cried someone who was standing in the front line. It was like a spark setting gunpowder ablaze. Curses and cries of hatred beset the royal ears. The people of Moscow had spoken at last.

The Tsar reined in his horse. Gourko placed his hand upon his sovereign's arm, but it was roughly shaken off.

Turning round, the Tsar beckoned towards him Pochowski, who still acted as captain of the royal guard. And this in no treacherous spirit. The Nihilist leaders feared the extremities to which fury might drive their fanatical armies. The Tsar, at least, must be safe-guarded from their violence.

Pale with rage Nicholas pointed to the clamorous bystanders.

"Captain!" he commanded. "Fire on this rabble."

Pochowski started and changed colour.

"Your Majesty——" he commenced.

"What, sir! Do you attempt to argue?" shouted the Tsar.

"But, sire," stammered the confused officer. "I dare not fire, for your Majesty's sake. Such an act would excite them to a riot. Your life would be endangered."

"You dare to disobey me?" cried Alexander. "You may consider yourself under arrest. Slivinski," he went on, turning to the officer next in command, "I place you in authority. Do my bidding."

Slivinski coloured and hesitated.

"I agree with Captain Pochowski," he faltered.

"Enough," cried the enraged sovereign. "I have no longer even a faithful bodyguard, then! Silence, sir!" he exclaimed, as he saw Slivinski was about to make some deprecatory explanation. "You have chosen your time well. Gourko, let us get on to the Palace."

So saying, the two dashed off rapidly in the direction of the Kremlim, the crowd parting to let them pass. Slowly and ashamed the Royal Guard halted, with the two disgraced officers at their head.

Within a few minutes the news of this outburst flew through the streets like wildfire, and the most violent excitement prevailed. A rush was made to the great square, and here the dense crowd swayed and seethed with the passion of turbulent fury. Moscow, runs the saying, is a kitten when it is at play, but a tiger when it is aroused. And now the great city abandoned itself to all the tempestuous fury of ungovernable revolt. There was no longer any attempt at concealment. From every nook and cranny crept forth the hunted Nihilist, the terrible minister of destruction, pest and patriot, the reformer aflame with generous purpose, and the vile assassin athirst for blood. All that was good and all that was bad blended in this surging multitude of men.

Pochowski saw it and trembled. It was becoming a tempest that he could not direct. To what terrible lengths might not this passionate community proceed, if once it abandoned itself to its fury? The revolution he aimed at might become nothing less that a new Reign of Terror, a tornado of destruction and unbridled license. It would make the patriot's deed accursed.

He flung himself among the uncarious people. He appealed to them to remain orderly.

"Men of Russia," he said passionately, "we must be united or we shall lose all. Our brothers without are completing the great plan; let us hear from them first. It becomes us to see that no stain rests upon our noble work. We get our victory twice over if we get it without bloodshed. All is well so far. Moscow is true to the cause, and it is due to her that she should set an example of dignity and self-control to the rest of the empire."

His words, heard by but a few amid the deafening roar, were little heeded. Some temperate citizens attempted to aid him in calming the passions of the constantly increasing multitude, but it was a task quite beyond their power.

"Shall we be idle whilst our brethren are at work?" cried one of the orators, who were by this time haranguing the crowds in every direction. "We have the fox safe in our power, and shall we let him escape?"

"Down with the Tsar," cried a thousand voices, as the speaker stretched out his hand to the ancient palace of the Muscovite kings, and a great roar of assent went up.

The passions of the people were inflamed to a still more violent pitch by a small body of the royal troops, who, hearing these cries of disloyalty, and fearing for their master, had issued from the Kremlin and charged into the vast crowd with the mad hope of dispersing them. With a howl of rage, the people flung themselves fiercely upon their assailants.

The latter though armed, could do nothing against this resistless torrent of humanity, who, in frightful earnestness, beset the little company of soldiers, tearing the men from their horses attacking them with every weapon that lay to their hand, and splitting them up into sundered atoms, which were entirely at the mercy of a merciless and howling multitude.

Pochowski saw these things and shuddered. The wild beast was already loose. He looked anxiously at his watch.

Already three hours had passed by, and there was no news.

But what would happen when it *did* come? Moscow was a mad dog. Success would only goad her into new violence and unutterable outrage.

He gave a few hurried directions to the soldiers in attendance on him, and dashed off to the scene of this sickening conflict. As he did so, he perceived a single horseman making off along the square, evidently in the direction of the Tverskaga Zastava.

"A royal messenger!" he exclaimed. "The Tsar must have had news. Is it well or ill?"

His question was destined to be speedily answered.

The crowd also seeing the orderly, who was evidently seeking to evade notice, suddenly turned upon him with a shout.

"He bears dispatches!" shouted someone, and in a second he was dragged off his horse, and held violently struggling on the ground.

A dozen hands searched him—nor vainly. A sealed packet snatched from his tunic, was held triumphantly aloft amid screams of exultation.

"Read it aloud," came the shout. "Mount the pedestal. Let us hear what he is doing to destroy us."

In obedience, the fortunate citizen thus raised to distinction got upon the base of the Miniv Monument, and tore open the dispatch. As he read it, the joy that illumined his face betrayed the character of the news.

A sealed packet . . . . . was held triumphantly aloft.

"Friends," he shouted, "Russia once more is free. St. Petersburg has fallen. This morning she is in the hands of the Nihilists. The flag of the Republic waves from the Winter Palace. The reign of the Romanoffs is over."

He would have proceeded, but his voice was drowned in the vociferous shouting that beat through the Red Square like the thunder of the waves upon the sea. There was no restraint now. St. Petersburg was calling upon Moscow, and Moscow would not be found wanting.

Riot ran wanton through the streets. With the rough reason that animates a multitude when success welds its strange fragments into the semblance of unity, it split itself into several divisions and made for the different gates of the city, fearful that an attempt to escape might be made by the Royal party. A rush was made to the entrance of the Kremlin, but the huge fortress palace defied such amateur bombardment, and Pochowski only smiled grimly when he saw the dissipation of energy which, after all, might but prove the Tsar's salvation.

His own little troop of soldiers he dispatched to take observations, and keep him informed of what went on whilst he dashed off past the Church of St. Basil in the direction of the Red Gate.

As he swept round the great cathedral, a young officer met him and saluted.

"Ah, Prenskovitch," he exclaimed, "You bring news."

"Yes," answered the lieutenant. "You have heard that St. Petersburg is in our hands?"

"What else?" asked Pochowski anxiously.

"The British and United States fleets are in the Neva. The forts are already being bombarded."

Pochowski paused, clearly troubled by the intelligence.

"There will be no landing for the present, I suppose?" he asked.

"I think not," was the reply. "The forts are holding out and are well garrisoned. News has also come that the British are engaging us to-day at Kharkof. It is mere rumour, but I fancy that it is true. Perchance the battle is now over."

"If so," said Pochowski reflectively, "the fate of Russia will be decided. There will not be a second battle. Meanwhile, what of the Tsar. I presume you learnt this within?"

"Yes, captain," replied Prenskovitch. "The Kremlin is put in readiness for a siege. The Tsar and his family are in council in St. George's Hall. His advisers are with him, and also the Generals who have remained on his staff."

"The Romanoffs are at their last council!" said Pochowski bitterly. "Do you know to what conclusion they have come?"

"The Tsar awaits the issue of the day at Kharkof," replied Prenskovitch. "He intends to collect an army to invest St. Petersburg. For the present he will wait events in the south."

Pochowski smiled grimly and pointed to the cathedral. From one of its minarets waved a flag of quite new design. It was the white and red banner of the revolution.

"It is well he waits," he said. "The empire is already departed. Let us salute the youngest of republics!" And the stern agitator, with real emotion, raised his sword in military fashion in salutation of the fluttering silk.

Dismissing Prenskovitch, Pochowski rode on to the Red Gate. On his way he saw signs of the energy and determination of the people of Moscow. The whole town was in their possession. Here and there a small knot of soldiers had endeavoured to make a stand, but they had been ruthlessly cut down by the infuriated mob. From most of the public buildings flew the flag of the revolution, in all kinds of material, shape, and tint, as eager hands had contrived it. Evening had approached, and the city had become calm, for there was no longer any resistance to this new and terrible power that stirred fiercely within the breast of the great Russian people.

Yes, Russia was at last free.

Pochowski, as he rode along, felt his heart glow with the consciousness of the great, the noble, task he had that day completed.

His country had wrested itself from the tyrant's grasp with scarce an effort; nay, more than this, the path of the revolution was almost unstained by blood.

These dark, cruel forces he feared so much, the fierce spirits whose cunning brutality had made his cause so hated by those who did not understand it, had made no definite movement. The Tsar was safe in his royal palace—in honourable durance—and the republic would burst upon the world in all the glory of unsullied innocence.

Pochowski might well rejoice, for his life's mission was consummated. He was close to the Red Gate when his eye fell upon the figure of a man creeping cautiously along in the shadows, as if anxious to escape observation. Something in his appearance and manner caused Pochowski's heart to throb with a strange sensation of terror and foreboding, for he recognised in him one of the daring leaders of that most desperate band, the Nihilists of Moscow, whose sleepless hatred of authority had invented a thousand deeds of outrage to sully almost beyond redemption the cause of liberty in Russia.

He . . . . . gripped him by the throat.

Springing from his charger he rushed upon his dread associate, gripped him by the throat and pinned him with his back against the wall.

"There is some devilry afoot," he cried. "Why are you here? Tell me the truth or I will stretch you lifeless where you stand."

The eyes of the stranger cowered before his stern gaze.

"There is nothing. Believe me," he stammered.

"Liar!" shouted Powchowski, tearing a document from an inner pocket of the man's coat.

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Scorning the shrinking form beside him, he hastily opened the paper and read its contents by the fading light. He started violently, and great beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "shall I be in time?" An instant later his horse struck fire from the hard road as he was urged into a headlong gallop.

Dashing through the streets, careless of the straggling groups gathered here and there in animated discussion, with eyes firm set upon the noble outline of that splendid palace of the Tsar which fretted itself in graceful silhouette against the deepening azure of the sky, Pochowski, with a desperate rage in his heart, sped towards the stately gateway which dominates the outer gardens of the Kremlin.

But before he had reached it there came to his ears a dull muttering as of distant thunder, which instantaneously broadened out into a savage crash.

And then, as he gazed horror-stricken, he saw the graceful pinnacle which surmounts the chapel of St. George lurch outwards and fall in reverberating ruin.

This proud triumph of a great architect was now a shapeless mass of *débris*.

Realising too well the unutterable catastrophe that had occurred, he reeled in the saddle with anguish, and grew faint and sick at heart.

"The fiendish deed is done, then," he groaned. "Russia's grim destiny is too stong for us. Freedom has come, but she has extorted a terrible price!"

At this moment a man darted towards him from the dark shadow of the arch, with eyes aglow in the demoniac gleam of fanatical exultation.

"It is done," he yelled triumphantly, recognising his leader, "the Romanoffs are no more."

"Villain," exclaimed Pochowski, now rendered half mad with impotent fury; "you have slain our cause and you shall perish with it."

Drawing his sword he hacked at the murderer like a maniac, and not satisfied with the first two terrible blows, he leapt to the ground and did not desist until he had mangled the body beyond recognition.

And thus was Russia re-born.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A SORTIE FROM PARIS.

ADHERING inflexibly to his plan of operations throughout the campaign, Lord Roberts marched on Paris by both banks of the Seine. The northern advanced by way of Meulan and Triel to Herblay, and the southern concentrated at Poissy.

Sorely were the French tempted to break through their self-imposed restraint and attack him in detail, when the great bend of the Seine—where it sweeps round the heights of St. Achères—imposed a formidable obstacle to complete unity of action between the two forces.

In view of the history of subsequent events, they would undoubtedly have been well advised in risking much upon a series of determined battles in this locality. They must have inflicted great damage upon the invaders and caused considerable delay, even were they unsuccessful in the main issue. Besides, they had always the formidable *teinture* of fortifications to fall back upon.

But the heart of France was not in this war. Her soldiers were listless and dispirited, her generals fearful of disastrous consequence.

So the counsels of prudence prevailed, and beyond the constitution of comparatively feeble corps of observation, nothing was done to check the British at the one great point in the advance on Paris, where they laid themselves absolutely open to strong assault, without the possibility of either section of the army helping the other.

The result was seen when too late.

When the staid JOURNAL DES DEBATS informed the Government that "forts were all very well, but fighting was better," Lord Roberts was in possession of St. Germain and Argenteuil, with his gigantic force spread over the intervening ten miles of the Seine valley where it bends due south towards Versailles.

At once there was a fierce outbreak of public opinion in Paris. The dancing behind the fortifications so graphically depicted by the GIL BLAS was suspended whilst the merry makers prepared a surprise visit to the Lycée, and the outcome of a savage determination on the part of the authorities to preserve order at all costs, was seen in the shooting of many innocent victims in the streets, and the execution of several too emphatic patriots.

Something, however, had to be done to allay popular feeling. M. Hanotaux was equal to the occasion.

He issued a flowing manifesto in which he wept in printers' ink over the necessity, paramount as it was in the opinion of military experts, that kept the regular troops inactive behind the vast line of defences. At all costs these must be held inviolate and impregnable.

"But," he went on, "Frenchmen, citizens of Paris, it shall not be said that the Government restrained you when panting in your rage, you seek to annihilate the enemy at your gates. It has been decided to form two special sortie columns for immediate service at the front. Citizens desiring to hurl themselves upon the British will give in their names at bureaux constituted in the different quarters, and preparations will be made for an immediate assault on the hostile lines."

There was a perceptible cooling of collective ardour when this official notification was read and digested.

Fewer speeches were made in the cafés, fewer taunts levelled at the Government in the press. Henri Rochefort, in the INTRANSIGEANT, boldly denounced the scheme. He headed the article: "Another Way of Killing Communards," and explained whether they were shot in batches by French soldiers at Père Lachaise, or shot in hundreds by the callous British, the end and aim of the authorities was the same—to get rid of the disaffected.

M. Hanotaux smiled as he read, but went on with the arrangements nevertheless, and civilly offered M. Rochefort the colonelcy of one of the newly raised regiments.

The editor..... lit a cigarette with the Minister's letter.

And the editor of L'INTRANSIGEANT smiled in his turn, lit a cigarette with the Minister's letter, and wrote another article, saying that the fantastic project might, perhaps, result in teaching the authorities some valuable lessons in strategy.

But the more ardent spirits among the populace were not to be repressed. No less than 50,000 names were enrolled for this special service.

They were hastily mobilised, marched outside Paris, and there armed, whilst the supreme command was given to a crackbrained general, whose loud-spoken condemnation of the Council of War had already nearly led to his imprisonment.

To launch these crazy and ill-formed thunderbolts of tin against the victorious troops of England was a mad notion in itself, were it not in strict pursuance of the policy discovered by M. Hanotaux and Rochefort.

But de Bossy, the leader, saw nothing outrageous or ludicrous in the scheme. He was fully persuaded that his cohort of enthusiasts, directed by his genius, was capable of clearing a path through the strong British lines, and he no sooner got within striking distance than he hurried forward to the attack.

This was delivered at a peculiar hour, four o'clock in the

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afternoon, and was heralded by an unexpected artillery movement by the French, who galloped up to close quarters and shelled the British centre, held by Massy's division, as it happened, before their opponents quite realised what was occurring.

Under cover of the momentary confusion thus created, de Bossy brought on his two army corps, divided into ten brigades of five thousand men each, and without paying the slightest regard to reserves or supports, attacked with his whole force along a front extending nearly a mile.

A few minutes after they were first discovered, the leading brigades were close to Massy's outposts; within half-an-hour de Bossy's followers had by sheer weight and uncontrolled audacity forced their way like a gigantic wedge right into the centre of the British position.

Four regiments were cut into ribands in the vain attempt to dam this outrageous torrent of madmen.

Guns were thundered to the front and discharged shrapnel and grape point blank at the assailants, but they scarce had time to limber up and retreat before the ground they had taken was overrun by the now frenzied French.

De Bossy, who seemed to lead a charmed life, rode at the head of the right attack and cheered on his men with a courage and buoyancy of spirit that rendered him almost inspired.

For a little while matters looked very serious indeed.

French staff officers, who watched the progress of events from the neighbouring heights, sent off urgent messages for more guns and prompt assistance by trained troops, and by five o'clock there was every indication of a great struggle commencing, which might last all through the night.

But a check now occurred.

Lord Roberts, who had been taking a rest after an exceptionally busy day, when the heavy firing at the front warned him of some unusual development, hastily summoned his staff and rode forward to get definite information.

This no one could give him. But from the summit of a hill he was able to note the method and manner of the assault, and he quickly made up his mind as to the course to be pursued.

"Tell General Massy," he said to an aide-de-camp, "to attack with every available man, and use the bayonet at the earliest possible moment."

Two others he despatched to Generals Alleyne and Nairn, the one to hurry up his division on the left, and the other to fight every available gun under any conditions.

Turning to Harington, he continued: "You go to Sir Drury Lowe and ask him to charge with 10,000 cavalry on the enemy's left flank within half-an-hour. That is the line of country to be followed by the division," pointing with his sword to an open stretch of meadow land that ran from the British lines and bent towards the French columns. "You had better accompany Sir Drury Lowe and show him the proper direction."

Harington rode two miles in eight minutes, which is good going across country, and found Sir Drury Lowe already busy marshalling his array in anticipation of hasty orders.

There were about 8,000 sabres on parade, but the gallant cavalry commander decided to lose no time in trying what these could effect as a preliminary. Giving instructions for a reserve brigade to be constituted, and brought to his assistance, he set off at a sharp canter, and five minutes before the time allotted by the Commander-in-Chief the British horses were sweeping in splendid style along the level belt of grass selected for their passage.

By this time the tumultuous mob of the enemy had been effectually halted.

The 42nd Highlanders, the Yorkshire Regiment, the Lincolns, the Durham Light Infantry, the 1st and 4th battalions of the 60th, the 3rd battalion of the Rifle Brigade, and many other gallant corps, had flung themselves upon the advancing French, and were now holding them back with the bayonet as a strong swimmer buffets his way against a stream.

Slowly but surely they forged through the struggling mass, whilst the screams of the unfortunate victims who vainly sought to escape, mingled with the exultant yells of their comrades in the rear who pressed on to death in their turn.

The Colonel of the 42nd, mounted upon a magnificent grey horse, encountered de Bossy and struck at him with his claymore in such hearty earnest, that the blow broke the Frenchman's sword raised for the parry.

The noble horse leapt right into the midst of the press.

De Bossy lurched from his charger on the offside and was received on the point of a bayonet, whilst a gruff Argyllshire voice roared at him:

"Ye drivellin' eediot, could ye no fa' like a mon and not like a bag o'meal?"

Which was De Bossy's requiem.

When Sir Drury Lowe's division was within striking distance, he did not hesitate a second in divining the true conditions under which to make his cavalry most effective against the disorderly rabble in front.

"Echelon formation," and "fresh points of attack," were the instructions quickly transmitted to commanding officers and squadron leaders. Then the series of charges commenced.

Liberally interpreting Lord Robert's orders, Harington accompanied Sir Drury Lowe in the first rush, at the head of the 17th Lancers.

Practically no attempt was made by the French to beat off the terrible engine of destruction now levelled at them. Lances were slung and swords drawn as being far more deadly under the circumstances, and forthwith the British horsemen began their awful work as though they were cutting down brushwood. Yet, after the first flinching of the human undergrowth through which they hewed their way, the task became a strenuous one. Desperate, maddened with the final rage against unavoidable death that renders the tiger so fearsome, the Frenchman, unable to retreat or go forward, sought to sell their lives dearly.

Harington's charger had his flank ripped open with a bayonet thrust. Frenzied with pain, the noble horse leapt right into the midst of the press, lashed out furiously to clear a way for himself, and then bounded into a fresh group. This time he stumbled, and blundered to his knees, throwing Harington forward on his neck. Whilst striving to recover his seat Teddy felt a heavy crack on his head, the light left his eyes, the sound of conflict died away into nothingness, and he fell from the saddle as one dead.

He had been struck by a clubbed rifle, and would infallibly have been stabbed by his infurated assailants did not his charger again strike vigorously on all sides with his iron-shod feet.

A rush of Lancers now cleared the locality, and the horse finished the charge with them, receiving no further injuries and trotting back to his quarters when the business was over.

The end came quickly once the constituent elements of the sortie became convinced that death and not glory lay in front.

(To be continued.)

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

T. R.—Butter made from the thin milk of the native cow in India is bluish in colour. To those who have been accustomed to the golden tint of fresh butter it is decid dly strange to see the bread apparently painted blue, and it is with reluctance that they touch it; but it's very good stuff, after all.

S. P.—In this country, during the reign of Charles I., spurs were commonly worn as part of the male attire, whether the wearer was accustomed to ride or not.

R.—Your canary probably came from Germany. The exportation of canaries from that country is estimated at more than 100,000 yearly; of these by far the greater portion go to the United States, some come here, and some are sent to Russia.

A CORRESPONDENT who has just returned from China after a stay of four years sends me a letter in which he writes in the following manner concerning railway accommodation: "The carriages are fitted up in the simplest possible manner; no cushions or cl th or mattings are used, owing to the uncleanliness of the natives. Metal parts are used as sparingly as possible, because the native finds it difficult to resist the temptation of cutting them off and stealing them. Chinamen take an awful lot of luggage, and are quite content to travel in an open goods-truck. Fares are very low, and I have known a man to charter a whole train of such trucks for his not very numerous family and his immense quantity of luggage. On the mail trains there are carriages fitted with more comfort for the convenience of more civilised people."

M. L. asks: "Can you tell me where the quotation 'Men are but children of a larger growth' appeared."——————In Dryden's "All for love."

W. R. D. asks: "What difference is there between a minute gun and any other gun?"——————A minute gun is so called because a minute elapses between each discharge. It is generally a signal of distress at sea, or a gun fired at the death of a distinguished individual.

HYGIENIC.—There is said to be only one make of shoe in the world which countenances five toes on the human foot, and that is the wooden shoe of Belgium.

F. G. H.—I should say the most expensive sporting events in the world are international yacht races. Some years ago, five days of yachting between the *Vigilant* and *Valkyrie*, including the cost of three other vessels who were built to defend the Cup, but were not selected, probably cost the Americans £111,000.

S. D. G. writes: "Is there any reason attributed to the saying that if one's ears burn someone is talking about you?"——————This conceit is ascribed to the superstition of guardian angels, who are supposed to touch the right ear if the talk is favourable, and the left if otherwise. This is in order to cheer or warn, as the occasion necessitates.

C. H.—Any dance in which the partners stand up and face one another may be called a country dance.

B. Y.—To "knock the spots off anything" is an allusion to the traditional skill of Western cowboys and famous rifle shots, who would shoot the spots out of a card held between the fingers of a friend.

IMP.—The word "imp" formerly meant "child." Shakespeare speaks of the imps in the Tower, thereby meaning children, and in one of his sermons Jeremy Tayler refers to "the imps that sang Hosannas to Jesus in the Temple."

M.—A cigar is served to the Italian soldier as part of his daily ration.

H. B.—The Belgian peasant goes in largely for the rearing of cock fowls, which he trains to crow very frequently. Cock-crowing competitions take place at intervals, and the peasant whose bird excels in this performance has attained the height of his ambition. The birds are placed in cages set in a row, for the purpose of stirring the spirit of emulation within them; near each bird is a marker, whose duty it is to mark down each crow made by the bird. The cock that scores the highest number wins the prize and becomes the joy of its master's heart.

Y.—The most interesting, if not the oldest, pawnticket in existence was that discovered at Florence some two years ago. It was found in an old portfolio of drawings, and bears the signatures of Tasso, the great poet. On this ticket he acknowledges the receipt of 25 lire (£1), for which the lender held as security his father's sword, four sheets, and two table-covers. It is dated March 2nd, 1570. Tasso, like Milton, did not make a fortune by his poetry.

D.—At the battle of Trafalgar the heaviest gun used threw a projectile weighing 32lb.; our modern 110-ton gun throws a shot that weighs 2,000lb.

L. O.—The porters of Smyrna are exceedingly strong; they carry with comparative ease a load of 200lb. Their diet is chiefly fruit and olives. Olives, by-the-way, are very sustaining.

ETHEL M.—Generally speaking, examinations for lady clerkships in the G.P.O. are held every six months. Candidates must be of not less than eighteen and not more than twenty years of age.

W. P. writes to ask if the transmission of messages through telegraph wires injures birds that may be perched upon them.————Certainly not.

ALICE W.—The first woman to obtain the degree of M.D. was Elizabeth Blackwell, of the United States, in 1849.

S. P. G. writes to ask if the common idea that a seafaring life tends to prevent growth is a true one?————Although this was no doubt the case in the days of small ships, cramped accommodation, bad food and water, and, practically, unventilated living apartments, it is doubtful whether it is true of the present day. There is, however, one reason which would largely account for stunting of growth in those who have been sailors from early youth. This is the fact that from the time he leaves port the sailor can never sleep more than four hours at a time. Now sleep is very important to growth, and no doubt this has some effect. At the same time, it is quite possible that the constant exercise and the constant breathing of the pure sea air may largely counteract it.

C.—The tea-cigarette that was placed upon the market some time ago was not a success. It was made of the unbroken leaf of green tea, slightly moistened. The effect on the practised smoker was bad, but on the tyro it was indescribable. Strangely enough, the cure for the sickness was a cup of tea.

A. H.—The longest tunnel in England is the Severn Tunnel, on the Great Western Railway; it measures 7,664 yards.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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WHEN YOU SEE "HOME NOTES," BUY IT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 524. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 14TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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to crack a black beetle. Why? Because it is not necessary. You can crack a black beetle with the end of a small poker, and save your strength, and shew your wisdom. Don't give your lad a big thrashing for a small fault, or your maid a big scolding for a slight offence. You lose your dignity, and do no end of harm. Neither lads nor maids are perfect, and we've an idea that there is room for improvement in most of us. But do nothing in a towering passion. Leave that to mad dogs. Don't use unparliamentary language when we tell you of a good thing, say Page Woodcock's Wind Pills for the cure of Indigestion, Liver Complaints, Wind on the Stomach, Costiveness, Sick Headache, &c.

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Is Full Weight 11b. Tablets, and is to be had of all Grocers, Oilmen and Co-Operative Stores throughout the United Kingdom.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 524.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 14th, 1899.

Edited by J. ARTHUR PEARSON.

THE NEW NURSE.

"WELL," said Mrs. Abbott, leaning back in her big chair, "well, the directors have 'sat upon' Miss Clyde, and the general verdict is 'acceptable.'"

"Poor Miss Clyde!" said Dr. Lane, with lazy sarcasm.

"I am afraid," said Miss Morse, the head nurse, with a would-be coquettish glance at the indifferent doctor, "that you don't treat that august body with due respect. In fact, you are almost frivolous in your mention of it."

"They have discussed the matter," continued Mrs. Abbott, "and they have decided that she shall be capped. What do you think of it, Doctor?"

"What do *you* think of it? That is more to the purpose, it seems to me."

"I am all in favour of it," confessed the superintendent of nurses, with a good-natured laugh. "She is fast becoming a special favourite of mine. She is young, pretty, and an only child; it seems she was a society butterfly, but had aspirations. Of course, the parents were not aware of the extent of her dissatisfaction, and it came upon them like a blow when she decided to leave home and become a nurse. Certainly the vagaries of girls are very perplexing."

"They are, indeed," sighed Miss Morse.

"When she first came I was doubtful of her staying a week. I saw her look of astonishment when our stew came on the table, and it amused me. Then I saw that she forced herself to eat it, and I rather admired her pluck. My admiration has grown as I have seen the manner in which she has gone through her tasks. It has not been easy for her, but I really think she is beginning to enjoy it."

"She is evidently a very determined individual," said Dr. Lane carelessly. "So, now, as your soft heart is taken by her prettiness——"

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"Oh, no, Doctor! By her earnestness."

At this moment the Doctor was called away, so he evaded a reply.

When he returned he found another person in the room.

A tall, slender, very graceful girl, not more than twenty years old. Her blue print gown and sheer apron were dainty and fresh, and the kerchief crossed over the rounded bosom left the white throat bare. Her hair, which was abundant and of a very beautiful gold colour, was braided and wound round and round the little stately head; and her eyes, large, soft and grey, were fixed half-anxiously on Mrs. Abbott's ruddy countenance.

"Come here, my dear," that kindly woman was saying. And with her breath coming a little quicker, Miss Clyde obeyed, and advanced a little nearer:

"I am pleased to be able to tell you," continued the superintendent, "that the Board of Directors have decided to accept you. They met to-day, as you may be aware, and from your record they think you suitable for the post. Let me congratulate you, and also welcome you into the profession."

"Thank you," said the girl, with a grateful glance. "You have been very kind to me, Mrs. Abbott, and I—I appreciate it."

"So now," said Mrs. Abbott, with a smile, "you are a nurse, and may get your cap as soon as you like."

Miss Clyde was on the point of retiring, and had, in fact, almost reached the door, when Dr. Lane's voice arrested her.

"I wonder," he said in his lazy fashion, "how Miss Clyde would look in a cap? Miss Morse, will you not lend Miss Clyde your cap for a moment?"

With very evident reluctance Miss Morse removed her cap, and Mrs. Abbott placed it on Miss Clyde's head.

And there the new nurse stood, her hands tightly clasped together, her colour coming and going with every breath. But there was a passionate indignation in her heart. What right had he to make her stand here and be looked at in such a fashion! He was quite the most insulting man she had ever met!

"Very becoming," he said at last, in a careless, somewhat bored tone.

Without waiting for any more, she almost tore the cap from her head, and gave it back to its owner.

"I wonder, now," he went on meditatively, "why you did not become a nun?"

Mrs. Abbott laughed in her jolly way.

Miss Clyde turned to the door and went out without a word.

* * * * *

Katharine Clyde had not enjoyed an easy position since her arrival at the hospital one month ago. She was so different from the other nurses that they generally looked askance upon her, and while they had not been actually unkind, had not treated her in a friendly manner. Miss Morse, she felt, had for some unknown reason hated her from the first, and had shown it in every petty way possible. While Katharine's strict attendance to duty, and evident desire to learn, had left her head nurse very little room for complaint, yet every trifle had been represented in the worst light possible, until the girl wondered how Mrs. Abbott's opinion could have been so favourable.

And this was not the worst. "I could stand everything else if it were not for him!" she told herself to-night. And in fact the greatest antagonism seemed to have sprung up between herself and Dr. Lane from the moment of their first meeting. His calm assumption of superiority over everyone with whom he came in contact was what she could not endure. The fact that he was really a rich man, that he was the cleverest young doctor in the city, and that his only reason for studying surgery was his love for it, made him, perhaps the most influential person in the hospital. And so used was he to admiration and flattery, that he could not imagine anyone's refusing them to him. The girl had always disliked him, but to-night she felt that she fairly hated him.

"He will find," she said between her shut teeth, as she walked quickly away, "that there is one woman who has no intention of falling down and worshipping him. A nun indeed!"

* * * * *

Not the least of her trials had been the persistent determination of everyone here to ascribe her taking up nursing to a disappointment in love, and no one knew how her proud spirit chafed under it. Why could not they understand that a dreamy, romantic girl, with nothing on earth to do but enjoy herself, should be attracted by a life that promised self-sacrifice and a continual round of good works? To a woman of Katharine's temperament it was the most natural thing in the world.

Dr. Lane appeared the most determined of all to believe in her sentimental disappointment, and she considered that his question to-night added insult to injury.

Within the next week she had donned her uniform, and then began to feel for the first time like a nurse. And very sweet she looked in the severely plain gown and ample, snowy apron, the soft kerchief crossed demurely on her breast, the pretty cap crowning her gold braids.

Miss Clyde had been at the hospital nearly eight months before she was required to nurse for Dr. Lane. But one unfortunate evening in February, when she was chatting for just a moment with Miss Grayson, a dark-eyed, vivacious little maid, whose cap was never straight, Mrs. Abbott bustled in hurriedly.

"Miss Clyde," she said quickly, "prepare immediately to go on special duty with a typhoid fever case in the Mason's ward."

"Whose case is it?" said Katharine.

"Dr. Lane's. And, my dear," added the kindly lady, who had certainly opened her heart completely to this soft-eyed girl, "you must do your best, and win golden opinions from him. It is rather a desperate case, and his asking so particularly for you, such a young and almost inexperienced nurse, shows how highly he thinks of you. For he is very difficult to please."

The end of this speech brought them to the door of the Mason's ward, and Katharine, with a sinking heart, followed Mrs. Abbott into it. To have to nurse for this man! To have to converse with him, to take orders from him, to be liable to visits from him at all hours of the day! She hated the thought.

He left the room shortly after she entered it, and she could see him through the half-opened door, going slowly down the corridor, giving his orders very earnestly to Mrs. Abbott. Miss Clyde lost the count of her patient's pulse as she dreamily thought what broad shoulders he had; then she flushed indignantly, told herself she disliked fair men, and that he was overbearing and intensely disagreeable.

When she came over to the ward—or room, for it was a room off the ward—the next morning, Miss Murray, who was on special night duty with her patient, gave her a discouraging report. Katharine was engaged in

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giving her patient one of his frequent sponge baths when the doctor came in. He looked grave and tired, and scarcely noticed her. When his visit to the patient was over, and she followed him out to the corridor, he gave his orders in an abrupt manner, and then walked quickly away, at which Miss Clyde was extremely well-pleased.

The patient was trying; he was very ill and delirious most of the time. The nurse grew thin and nervous over him, but her energy and her wonderful patience never flagged. She was indefatigable, and could not be persuaded to leave him to take proper meals and exercise. Dr. Lane noticed her pale cheeks and the hollows round her large eyes, and on several occasions ordered her out in a by-the-way tone that she resented and did not obey.

To-day, however, she had nearly fainted during his afternoon visit, and was still sitting on the sofa at the foot of her unconscious patient's bed, striving giddily to recover her strength, and feeling weakly indignant because he was standing there, gazing at her from under his lowered brows; when he abruptly turned and left the room.

Outside he encountered Miss Grayson.

"Please go to Miss Clyde's room and bring me her cloak and hat," he said quickly, and then passed on down the corridor, not noticing, perhaps not caring, that the little nurse made her black eyes very big and round with astonishment and curiosity, and stared after him.

* * * * *

When he returned to Miss Clyde, he was dressed for a walk and had her cloak and hat.

"I am going," he said "to take you out for an airing, Miss Arnold will take your place for an hour."

He stood there, holding her cloak for her.

"I—" began Katharine.

"You must go or break down, and I have no desire to have another patient on my hands."

"Not on your hands," said Miss Clyde haughtily. "Dr. Yates is the house physician."

"Nevertheless, I should certainly consider you my patient. Will you kindly put on this cloak, Miss Clyde, and relieve me of it?"

Katharine looked up into his stern face, and then she obeyed! She stood quite silent and passive, and allowed him to put on her cloak, and even to button it under her dimpled chin, although his hands were strangely awkward and unsteady for a young doctor with such iron nerves as he was known to have.

Then they went out, passing several nurses, who looked at them in astonishment, as their mutual antagonism was well known to all. He assisted her into the carriage, and she made herself as small as possible in her corner, and did not volunteer a word as the swift horse whirled them off.

He made one or two careless observations, to which she replied in monosyllables, and would not unbend from her dignity an inch. The rapid, gliding motion through the keen, bright air would have been highly enjoyable to her under any other circumstances, but under these the only emotion of which she was cognizant was of an intense longing to be back.

But the drive really did her good, and she went about her duties on her return with a renewal of her old energy.

* * * * *

It was later in the evening, and everyone was down at tea, when the Doctor sent Miss Clyde to the pharmacy for something he was in immediate need of. It seemed to him, sitting there in that dim room with his fingers on the patient's rapid pulse, that she was very long about it. At last, so impatient did he become, he softly opened the door, and stepped out into the corridor.

It was deserted. He met not a soul on his quick, noiseless walk to the pharmacy. The lights were all somewhat dim, and everything seemed unnaturally quiet. He paused on the threshold at the sight of Katharine.

She was leaning over the counter mixing something, with quick fingers, in a glass. He could see her in profile—the graceful bend of her golden head, the round white throat where the kerchief had a little slipped aside in her haste, the upward curve of her dark lashes against the softly flushed cheek, the dainty, curled red lips a little parted.

In an instant, before he quite knew what he was doing, he had started forward and caught her to his breast, and was pressing his lips in a long, burning kiss to hers.

Katharine wrenched herself free, and stood looking at him for a moment, white and panting, and then swept past him, with head held haughtily erect.

The Doctor stared after her until she quite disappeared, and then leant back against the counter and put his hands in his pockets. His blood was still racing with unusual violence through his veins and his pulses thrilling from that recent contact, yet he had realised for the first time, as he caught that strange pale look on her face, of fear and aversion, the enormity of the thing he had done. He was appalled, literally frightened—*he!*—at the realisation; yet, not for all he was worth would he have missed it.

In this contradictory state he was still standing when he heard the nurses come trooping up from tea. The pharmacy was a common meeting place for them all, and as he felt too agitated to face them at present, he walked slowly down towards his patient's room. He had passed by the door two or three times and was trying to gather up the courage to enter, when Katharine opened the door and looked out. Alarm was plainly imprinted upon her lovely face. Without a word he followed her back through a few feet of the ward into the room.

A great change for the worse had taken place in the patient, and in working over him these two appeared to forget their relative positions. The Doctor, however, followed wistfully with his eyes the golden gleam of Miss Clyde's hair as she moved about the dim room, and Katharine, for her part, carefully avoided getting anywhere near the Doctor.

Miss Morse, who now joined them, noticed that there was something between them, and was puzzled.

The patient died just as it was time for the night nurse to come on duty. Miss Clyde looked so white and so weak, that the Doctor whispered to Mrs. Abbott, and she drew the girl away as she was about to attend to the body.

"Miss Murray will do that," she said kindly. "You must come away, my dear, and rest. You look ill."

"I—I don't feel very well," gasped Katharine.

She staggered a little, and everything grew black before her. She was just dimly conscious of seeing Dr. Lane spring towards her, and of fighting feebly against him—and then lost everything.

"She has fainted," said the Doctor, in a subdued voice. "Get the nearest room ready, and I will bring her in."

Very tenderly and reluctantly he laid his unconscious burden down upon the bed they had prepared for her,

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and left her to the care of the nurses. He was wandering about aimlessly and unhappily, not being able to settle to anything, when Miss Grayson came running up to him.

"Doctor," said she breathlessly, "will you please come in and look at Miss Clyde? I can't find Dr. Yates, and she is delirious."

Without waiting for her to finish, Dr. Lane hastened off in the direction of Miss Clyde's room. As he opened the door a wild, unmeaning babble in her sweet treble fell upon his ear, and she was sitting up in bed, her lips and cheeks crimson, her eyes glittering with fever, her golden hair all unbound and falling over her white gown. She was laughing and talking very fast, and Mrs. Abbott and Miss Morse stood one on either side of the narrow bed, trying to sooth her.

Katharine had got the fever. For days she was delirious, and then lay in a stupor that was even worse. Dr. Lane scarcely left her, neglecting all other duties to sit in that darkened room, with bowed head, listening to her wild ravings.

He was much too wretched to attempt to hide his feelings. He cared very little whether they were known or not, and every one knew that if Miss Clyde died the dearest thing in life to Dr. Lane would be gone.

She did not die, however. Slowly, almost with reluctance, as it would seem, she struggled back to life.

The first warm days of April were come, and Miss Clyde's first airing was being talked of. It seemed to be all "Miss Clyde" now; everyone in the hospital was talking and thinking of Miss Clyde.

After dinner one day when the scent of the spring flowers came softly in, Miss Morse was closeted with Mrs. Abbott in the superintendent's office.

"And you are sure you are not mistaken?" Mrs. Abbott was saying, in a perplexed tone.

"I saw it with my own eyes," declared the other.

"And Miss Clyde was angry, you say?"

"She seemed startled at first, of course, but she has evidently got over it," said Miss Morse, with a sneer. "And you must acknowledge it is light conduct, unbecoming a nurse."

The older woman looked at her steadily for a moment, then directed her gaze out of the window.

"Has it ever occurred to you that Dr. Lane is very much in love with Miss Clyde?"

"Probably," said Miss Morse sullenly. "But you know he has no intention of marrying. Hasn't he often said so?"

"However, if I mistake not, this is the Doctor's brougham stopping here now. We can easily refer this matter to him."

When the Doctor came in Mrs. Abbott met him gravely. He looked flushed and confused at her story, and Miss Morse smiled triumphantly. When the superintendent had finished, however, he looked up with sudden resolve.

"Mrs. Abbott," he said earnestly, "I acted unpardonably on the occasion you refer to, and my only excuse is that the love I have for Miss Clyde overcame my reason for the time being. My highest ambition is to make that young lady my wife. If you have any regard for her (and I think you have), you will not allow this story to become common property. However, enough of this. I have come to-day to take her for a drive, and I know you will see that she is comfortably dressed for it."

Katharine was delighted at the prospect of a drive. She was still very weak, and the Doctor carried her in his own strong arms down the stairs.

Dr. Lane placed himself beside her, and the horses dashed off. They were both very silent. He was sunken in thought, half-painful, it would seem by his expression, half-sweet.

Katharine at first contented herself with looking out of the window at all the sights she had been shut in from so long. Presently, however, something appeared to vaguely trouble her. She was trying to remember something. She turned her head and looked at her companion. Surely she had seen him before—where? Where? A pained, puzzled look came over her face, and then—then—it all rushed back upon her, and the dim, tormenting fancies of sickness cleared away.

At that moment Dr. Lane turned towards her—to catch again that look of fear and aversion he had seen in her eyes on that fatal night. He shrunk back an instant as from a blow. Then:

"Katharine, darling," he said humbly, "don't look at me so! I cannot bear it from you! Can't you forgive me, and pity the most wretched fool in Christendom? Sweetheart, if you knew how I love you, and how miserable I have been, you could not find it in your tender heart not to forgive me!"

She had turned her head away, and was looking from him, out of the window. One little ungloved hand lay on the seat between them. Lane put his own very tenderly over it.

"Won't you speak to me, Katharine? Won't you forgive me? My little love, look at me, and tell me I have not sinned past all hope of pardon."

Slowly Katharine turned her head, until her great soft eyes, filled with tears—and something else—looked into his. And then, somehow, it happened that the little weak head was laid down on his breast, and she was weeping for very happiness.

"And you really love me?" said Lane at last.

She looked up at him with some tender reproach in the grey eyes.

"Do you think," she said, "that I should be *here* if I did not now that memory has returned? Will this convince you?" and, drawing down his head, she put her soft, quivering lips to his.

"I believe you, Kate!" he whispered, drawing her closer to him.

T. G. BOWEN.

DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST TRAIN IN ENGLAND.

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

V.—A FRIENDLY GAME OF DRAUGHTS.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, as he drew on his slippers and settled himself for the evening, "if you will get the draught-board I'll play you a game. You're learning so rapidly that it's really a pleasure to play with you."

Mrs. Timmins giggled with delight, kissed her husband on the top of the head, and fluttered away to find the board and men.

"Which shall I take, the white or the red men?" she asked, as she plumped down on a stool about a foot and a half lower than his easy chair, and arranged the apparatus at an angle of fifty degrees.

"I think you misapprehend my suggestion," retorted Mr. Timmins. "I didn't propose to go tobogganing down hill. My idea was a game of draughts, and if you think those men are going to stand on a board tipped up on one end, and wait to be moved, you're not thoroughly acquainted with their habits. There, can't you hold it like that?" and Mr. Timmins jerked his wife's side of the board up to her chin, and began arranging the white men on his rows.

"I'd better put a book under it," said Mrs. Timmins. "Or if you would lower your knees a little it would come even."

"Very likely," replied Mr. Timmins; "but my knees weren't constructed with special regard to draughts. They were put where they are and fastened, and they won't run up and down like a flag. If you can't hold up your side of the board we won't play."

"Oh, yes, certainly," said Mrs. Timmins. "Let's see, is it your move or mine?" And she pushed a man straight forward.

"What are you trying to play?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Do you think this is a game of football? Don't you know you've got to move sideways? It isn't your move either. Put that back. There. Now I'll move there."

"Oh, I know you're going to take me, you always do," squealed Mrs. Timmins, picking up the draught she had moved before and putting it in her mouth while she studied the prospect. "If I put it here you'll——"

"Swallow it, why don't you? If you don't want it taken, why don't you swallow it?" interrogated Mr. Timmins. "Can't you leave the thing alone till you're ready to move? Put it down, I tell you."

Mrs. Timmins restored it to its square and kept her thumb on it so as not to lose her move.

"If I put it there, can you take it?" she asked, wriggling it round and finally drawing her hand away in jerks, as if afraid to leave it.

"Just watch and see," grinned Mr. Timmins, as he popped a man over it and gathered it in.

"Now I'll move here," said Mrs. Timmins. "I don't know, though. Perhaps I'd better move here." And she chased a man over a half a dozen squares.

"Are you going to move 'em all?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Do you think that a man's triplets, and goes in six places at once? Move it there. Now, let me see. Let me see." And Mr. Timmins began to whistle.

Mrs. Timmins glanced up at the curtains to see if they were hung right, and then she turned to the board again, and shoved a man into another square.

"What are you doing?" howled Mr. Timmins. "'Tisn't your move! I haven't moved yet. Put him back and wait till I move."

Mrs. Timmins put it back with a sigh, and raised the board a little to get a rest for her elbow on her knee.

"Hold it still, can't you?" scowled Mr. Timmins. "Now I'll move here," he continued, not noticing that he left his king row open.

"Then do I take these two men and get a king?" inquired Mrs. Timmins. "Of course I do. Crown me. I've got the first king." And Mrs. Timmins chuckled hysterically.

"No, you haven't either. I didn't mean that move. If you can't play draughts without cackling like a hen you'd better give it up. I'll take that back and move here; now, so. Now you can move."

"Over here?" asked Mrs. Timmins.

"Certainly. That's very good." And her husband gobbled two men.

"I didn't see that; I'd rather put it here," she remonstrated.

"Too late now," said Mr. Timmins, pegging away for the king row. "You should study your moves first."

"If I go here I get another king," said Mrs. Timmins, plunging through an unguarded space.

"What d'you want to tumble 'em all over for?" shrieked Mr. Timmins. "Haven't you got any sense? You make more fuss over a king than most women over a baby. Don't you know it's my move? Give me back those men. What are you putting them there for? Here, this one goes there."

"No, it doesn't," reasoned Mrs. Timmins. "I know——"

"Oh, of course you know. You've got it all. All you want is a pair of hinges and speckled sides to be a draught board. If I ever want to beat some good player I'll put a wash-tub on your head and move you for a king. Where are my men?"

"I think they slid off," said Mrs. Timmins, screwing herself round to look under her chair, and thereby losing the rest of the draughts.

"Are you satisfied?" raved Mr. Timmins, kicking the board under the table. "Can't even play a game of draughts without making a fuss about it, can ye? I beat you, anyway." And Mr. Timmins plunged upstairs.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Timmins to herself. "I got a king."

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SUPPRESSED EVIDENCE.

It might truly have been styled a military dinner, for, with the exception of the host and hostess and three young society belles, the entire party was made up of army officers and their wives. The one other exception was only apparent, for Mr. Wright belonged to the body of war, although his duties were those of the department in London and not of the field.

Mr. and Mrs. Powell had, during the past five summers, spent their holidays in garrison towns where they k new many of the officers, and their dinner was the outward sign of sincere appreciation of similar hospitalities extended to them by their guests of the evening. It had proved an unqualified success, and now, as the coffee was served, the stories of army life, so gratifying to Mrs. Powell's love of things military, were going the rounds.

Colonel Hopgood had told of stirring times in which he had participated; Major Hinton, with his usual gallantry, had declared what a blessing women were to a soldier's life; while of the younger division, Lieutenant Savage, true to his branch of the service, let out the secret of how the infantry officers had, the year previous, outwitted their brethren of the cavalry at the Christmas ball.

Mr. Wright, when called upon, stated that, owing to his position in the Department, his knowledge of the army was purely documentary, and was made up entirely from the reports of the several commanding officers. Of its social life he knew little or nothing, and as official business was rather dry talking, he asked that the duty of story-telling might be transferred to one better posted in garrison life—Colonel Keller, he meant.

The Colonel was one of those old-school officers who never flinched when duty called, whether it was on the field of battle or in the social arena, and this summons found him alert to respond,

"Mr. Wright," he began, "is correct when he says that one who obtains his knowledge of army life from official reports knows very little of its inward workings and social life. In fact, some of these reports, although strictly in accordance with regulations, if read between the lines would convey a great deal more than one would infer from the stiff official wording. It is upon a report that I made over ten years ago that I now base my story.

"As a usual thing, there is nothing of so little use to the regiment on foreign service as a sub fresh from a Military Academy. He arrives on the full tide of his glory, and is hard to break in; although I will say that, with a few exceptions, these same raw recruits, after a couple of years' training, turn out to be good officers and a credit to the service.

"Lieutenant Dorsey—for reasons that will appear later, I have withheld his real name—was an exception to the usual run of these youngsters, inasmuch as he was both a popular and good officer from the day he joined us. He was also a thorough gentleman, and it was not a month before he was the favourite of the station; petted by the ladies, and admired and looked up to by the men. Strange to say, his head was not turned, and I soon began to look upon him as the most promising officer in my command.

"Major Hinton has spoken of the good influence of women on the lives of soldiers, and I agree with him. There are, however, exceptions to every rule, and such was the case in my story, for it was a woman who spoilt a career which at the start promised so much.

"It was the third summer after Lieutenant Dorsey had joined us that a young woman, whose name I shall not mention, came to visit the wife of one of the captains. I recall having read somewhere, 'Wherever youth and maiden are, there is a certainty of romance, and a chance of tragedy.' There was surely romance in this case, for at the end of the summer, when she returned to her home, she took the heart of my favourite lieutenant with her. It was to my wife that he shortly afterwards confided the secret of the engagement.

"During all that winter there was not a happier or more jovial officer than he, and when in the spring his application for leave was granted, he left for Bombay, followed by the good wishes of every officer and man in the regiment.

"Just three weeks from the time of his departure, and before his furlough was up, he again stood before me and reported for duty—a changed man. From the moment I looked into his eyes I knew something of serious import had occurred; but the chance to invite his confidence seemed never to present itself, so it was not until a couple of months afterwards that I learnt the true facts.

"The details came from my wife, who had written for particulars to a former school friend in Bombay. It was the old story. A young girl of more or less romantic turn of mind had become enamoured with army life during a visit, and had fallen in love, to a greater or less extent, with a good-looking young officer, the affair ending in an engagement. But a winter at home and a more tempting offer, from a financial point of view, had brought a change of mind, and to be the wife of an army officer with rather poor pay was no longer to her liking.

"Woman-like she was pleased with his devotion, and instead of breaking the engagement, she allowed him to continue writing such letters as might be expected from a man so thoroughly in love. One thing, however, he omitted to write. He did not tell her of his leave of absence, as he wished to surprise her. And he did.

"What occurred at the meeting none of us ever knew, but the man who returned to us 'for duty' was but a poor substitute for the light-hearted fellow who had so recently left us. The ladies attempted, by every womanly expedient, to cheer him and to bring him out of himself; the men tried, sometimes clumsily, but always sincerely, to show their sympathy and regard.

"It was useless—the arrow had gone home, and the wound would not heal.

"Then we were moved to an advance post on the frontier, and I hoped that would mend matters. But it didn't. Young Dorsey wanted above all else, apparently, to be left alone; and when not on duty he would shut himself in his room and remain invisible to every one.

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Nor was this the most serious change. The entire character of the man seemed transformed. The once reliable officer became careless and untrustworthy.

"When the outbreak on the border, early in spring, required immediate attention, it so happened that his troop was the only one that could be dispatched without delay. His captain was on leave and he, being the senior lieutenant, would naturally have been placed in command, but I felt that I could no longer trust him; I confess it was one of the hardest duties of my career as a soldier to order him on special duty, and send away the troop in the command of another officer. Poor fellow! The lesson was needed, but it cut deeply.

"For some time I feared that he would simply let himself sink into the depths of despondency. It must have been especially galling to his spirit when, after some hard work, the troop came home covered with glory, a share of which might have been his.

"Perhaps just that bitter medicine was needed as a tonic to his pride. At any rate, during the weeks of quiet that followed, I noticed in him a decided change for the better, more determination and resolve. The improvement was so marked that I decided to give him another trial. So one day when it became necessary to send a small detachment to quiet some unruly natives, I put him in command, and he departed with twenty-five men.

"It was the third afternoon after their departure that the officer of the day rushed into my room and reported that a messenger had just arrived with the news that a fight had taken place, and that Lieutenant Dorsey had been killed, but none of the men had been injured.

"It had been a long time since an officer had been brought home dead, and as the body was carried down the line of officers' quarters, every head was uncovered.

"With the death of the lieutenant the command had devolved upon his sergeant-major, a man well advanced in years, who worshipped the very ground upon which his lieutenant walked. It seemed only natural then, when describing the death of his favourite officer, before the members of my staff, that at times his voice should fail him, and tears dim his eyes.

"'It was just the day after we left,' he said, standing at attention, 'that we came upon their deserted camp. From signs we knew that they were not far off, and by noon we had located them. They had taken a position among a lot of rocks, and evidently intended to fight. The lieutenant called to me and said: "The only way to get those rascals out is to charge them. I shall lead. Follow me. Continue the pursuit until every one is taken or killed." We wheeled into line, but before we were fairly ready, he gave the word, and putting the spurs into his horse, bounded away far in the lead. We went after him as fast as possible, but he distanced us, and was far in advance when they opened fire. They fired only about six shots in all, and I saw him discharge his revolver twice in return, and then fall from the saddle. When we reached him he was dead, shot through the heart.

"'I left two men to look after him, while we continued the pursuit, as ordered. We captured four, wounding one, the rest escaped. As there was nothing more to do we returned.'

"That was a gloomy afternoon, and as I sat alone in my room looking over the official report written by my clerk and handed to me for correction and signature, I must acknowledge that I dwelt upon the death of my officer with feeling of the deepest sorrow. I forgot his failings of the past year, and thought only of the bright young fellow whose life had promised so much. It is no wonder that I wrote after the closing lines of the report: 'An officer who was an honour to the service, and died a soldier's death in the performance of his duty.'

"Just as I was about to sign the document my orderly entered and announced that Sergeant-Major Hooper desired to see me. Hooper was the man who had made the report of the lieutenant's death, and thinking he might have some favour to ask, I ordered that he be shown in. He appeared, carrying under his arm a bundle wrapped in an old newspaper.

"'I know that I should report to the officer of the day,' he said, 'but what I have to say is something about the lieutenant's death, and I think I should tell it to you a one.'

"'Something you omitted from your report?' I asked, and my voice must have sounded rather stern. For to withhold facts in such a case was a grave offence.

"'Yes, sir. But what I did not relate before your staff I intended to tell you,' and the same tremour was noticeable in his voice as when he reported the death. 'The facts of the fight are just as I related them. But after the fight I examined the lieutenant. He was dead, but I saw something that made me take off his tunic and put on another.'

"He undid the string of the bundle he carried under his arm.

"'It is the only evidence I withheld from my report.'

"He unfolded the coat, and held it up without a word. As I took it from him, turning it this way and that, to get the light upon it, something fell from the inner left-hand pocket to the floor. Very reverently the sergeant stooped and gathered up—what? Simply a delicate gold rim, a few scraps of blood-stained velvet, and what seemed the fragments of a miniature portrait of a woman painted upon porcelain. Yet though shattered beyond recognition, I think that as we viewed it silently, neither of us doubted whose picture, worn to the last over the young officer's heart, had been destroyed by the bullet that took his life.

"Replacing the remains of the portrait, I held up the coat so that I could see the hole through which the bullet had gone. The blood had long since dried, leaving its stain, but that was not all—the cloth was badly burnt.

"The garment slipped from my nerveless grasp, as a hundred thoughts flashed through my mind, and seizing Hooper by the shoulders, I cried:

"'Your report! You said no one was near him.'

"'I told the truth, sir,' he replied, and his head was bowed for the first time.

"'Heavens!' I breathed, 'you don't mean——'

"There were tears in his eyes as he slowly replied: 'Yes, sir; the lieutenant shot himself.'

"It must have been some hours later when an orderly appeared and asked if the report was ready to be forwarded, as the messenger had been awaiting it for some time. Where had my thoughts been during those hours? In the past, recalling some little act or saying of a brave young soldier who had made his last march.

"I picked up the report and re-read the lines I had added. Should I change them, giving the true facts and thereby cloud his memory? Or should I send it as it stood?

"Ladies and gentlemen, what would you have done in my place?"

H. FAIRFAX.

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A Special Report.

Fox Kneller was a district reporter on the *Southern Star*, a half starved, undermanned little provincial daily that was effusively grateful for a three-and-sixpenny advertisement, and threw in half a column of "notice" for a week's four-inch "run."

The *Southern Star* paid no dividends, being worked at a loss by a handful of local politicians, whose remarks were always given verbatim, with grammatical corrections by the editor, when necessary.

It never by any chance took an independent view of anything, excepting perhaps the weather; lightning and snowstorms not being advertised functions.

Its great rival contemporary was the *Daily Dawn*, and a reportorial error or even a misprint in that journal caused the *Star* to twinkle furiously.

Then would the *Southern Star's* editor—a weary old hulk with a fine education and a riotous nose—take a new nib and wax sarcastic to the full extent of his two-pound-ten a week. Then would the little boys who wrote the "locals" drop in funny lines on their own account, in prose or in verse according to the number of months which had elapsed since they had left school, and the state of their love affairs.

But the *Star* people looked chiefly to Fox Kneller to uphold their honour and confuse the enemy when possible, and Fox was as keen on the job as anyone.

He had been on the *Daily Dawn* himself once upon a time, and had left it "through misadventure," as he termed it. To put it briefly, Fox had misjudged the relative importance of Scotch whisky and a weighty political speech. On the night of his downfall the whisky was first and the speech nowhere—that is to say, it was nowhere in the *Daily Dawn* next morning.

Since that time Fox had taken nothing but coffee in winter and "small lemons" in summer. But he had conceived a venomous dislike for the *Dawn* people, and anathematised them illogically under his breath every time he saw one of their contents bills.

Curious to say "Fox" was not a nickname. He had been so baptised somewhere in West Cornwall, and possibly the name had suggested the profession of journalist, his forbears having caught pilchards from time immemorial. One of them, however, had, a few hundred years before married the daughter of a stranded French spy, which fact may account for some things.

Anyhow, the name, if scarcely a "Christian" one, fitted him exceedingly well, for his senses were marvellously acute, and that extra one peculiar to pressmen and engine-drivers, which is made up of all the others, together with a mechanical memory and some kind of doggish instinct, was developed in him to an almost incredible extent.

He was of middle height, square-jawed, in Cornish style, talked well, moved in jerks, was unmarried, and never caught colds.

The *Dawn* editor, an Oxford University man who had been, amongst other things, a war-correspondent and a Cook's tourist guide, had just been appointed when he discharged Fox Kneller, and the remainder of the staff had ever since taken turns, directly or indirectly, according to their position, in making that Oxford man understand what a blunder he had committed.

Fox had the same duties to perform for the *Southern Star* as he had previously fulfilled for the *Daily Dawn*, that is to say, he covered a district somewhere about sixteen miles by three, which district included a fashionable watering-place—Fox's home and headquarters—and two country towns of some importance, and lay at its nearest point about ten miles from the assize-town from which both the *Daily Dawn* and the *Southern Star* were published.

It was at the station of one of the two smaller towns—Marsh Royal—that Fox Kneller alighted at nine o'clock on this particular October night, to the not over cheerful accompaniment of thick driving rain from the south-east. Fox's advent there may be explained by the following three facts:—

(1) He had for some time past heard mysterious hints of a prize-fight without gloves being arranged between certain champions who were to meet somewhere in that neighbourhood.

(2) At a vestry meeting held that afternoon, he had overheard a churchwarden, known to be addicted to surreptitiously reading pink sporting papers in church, say that he had an important engagement that evening, and had moreover seen him wink, as he said so, to another member, who was an ex-army drill sergeant.

(3) He had, some hours later, seen these two men get into a much over-loaded cab, which cab he had watched driven away by a road that led to only two places, *viz.*, the deep sea, which was absurd, and Marsh Royal, in which locality Fox Kneller now found himself.

The station stood just outside the town itself, and Fox shivered and grunted as he started to walk along the straight, level road, which presently became a street with low melancholy rows of houses on either side, all of one monotonous pattern, and all having the same tragic uninhabited appearance.

The lamps flickered in blue despair, and the pavements near them glistened through the darkness and fog.

Warm visions of a well-lit billiard-room with accompanying cries of "Ah, too hard!" and "Thirty-nine all,"

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flashed across Fox Kneller's mind as he drew his shining waterproof cape more closely around him with a malediction on all forms of "sport"—except billiards.

Directly he came upon a building with a series of glowing upper windows, from which issued sounds of revelry and song. He halted opposite it for a few moments.

"Club Social," he muttered, "Jimmy Kent's there and be hanged to him!" and he grinned as there rose before his mental eye a slightly foppish figure with a *pince-nez*, superciliously listening to the local musical talent of Marsh Royal.

"Jimmy Kent" did the same district for the *Dawn*, and had in fact stepped into Fox's shoes.

"So near and yet so far, Jimmy," he muttered as he hurried on again. "You'll have something for breakfast besides toast in the morning—that is if I have any luck."

Fox was quite in the dark as to the exact *locale* of the fight, but he had a tolerably clear notion of where to look.

A few minutes after he had passed the Club, he came upon a triangular piece of shrubbery inclosed by iron railings.

Suddenly turning from the direct road, Fox Kneller passed rapidly to the most unfrequented side of the triangle and there halted.

Rapidly slipping off his waterproof coat he rolled it up tightly and thrust it, with his hat, through the railings into the midst of some shrubs. A little emptying of pockets, and behold the rain from the south-east beat on another Fox Kneller—one with a thick pea-jacket, a fur cap, a coarse red scarf and a square-cut goatee-beard—with a dingy clay-pipe to keep it all fitting company.

The next half-hour saw this transformed individual visiting sundry insignificant red-curtained public-houses, ostensibly in search of a mysterious (and mythical) "Mr. Martin," which individual had, it appeared, promised to meet him that evening at each of these very same public houses in order to "show him some sport."

Two—three—four he tried without success, but upon entering the fifth bar his quick senses immediately became aware of an air of bustle and subdued excitement which seemed very encouraging.

The place was crowded, not with loafing farm hands and unclean clay-cutters as had been the others, but with men of quite a different stamp.

Surely such a collection of small eyes and straight, thin lips were not there for nothing!

"Evening," said Fox, addressing an extremely busy young person with a shock head of orange hair behind the bar, "'ave there been a Mr. Martin here inquiring for me?" hoping fervently two things—that there did not happen to be a Mr. Martin present, and that he had repeated his formula for the last time that evening.

"Scotch yours, sir?—coming, sir—Martin—Martin—don't know no sich name—yes, very good cider, sir,"—thus the young person.

"He told me to meet 'im here," said Fox, growing more certain as he glanced round and affected a dubious air. Then making a bold stroke he sidled up to the bar, and leaning over close to the girl, whispered:

"Where's it coming off, my dear?"

"Straight through the passage," came the prompt reply.

Fox heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Ah," said he, "give us a Burton."

Retreating with his beverage, he coolly threw it out into the road, and replacing the empty glass, dived into the narrow passage to be confronted by a burly man, who extended a huge, beefy hand.

"Arf a minute! Where's yer t'oket?" said this obstacle in husky tones.

"That's all right, mate, I came with Mr. Parkin's," replied Fox, naming the vestryman; "only I had to go somewhere else first—didn't he tell you?—he got my ticket fur me."

Verbal fiction was a strong point with Fox. Possibly the fact of his having to stick so closely to veracity in his ordinary work made some outlet for romance necessary.

"Ugh! All right, I 'spose," grunted the obstacle doubtfully, and Fox's way was clear.

He stood within a roomy skittle alley transformed for this night only into the prize ring, ropes, stakes and all complete.

With a luck which persistently stuck to him through most of his doings, Fox Kneller had arrived just as the great fight was about to commence, and the consequent excitement and influx of the stragglers from the bar combined to cover Fox's entrance, which might otherwise have more nearly coincided with his exit than would have been pleasant.

There must have been many present whose knowledge of Fox Kneller's features was too good for them to be deceived by even such an excellent disguise as a square-cut goatee-beard. Had he been recognised, it was probable that the anomaly of an illegal prize-fight with an uninvited newspaper reporter present would not have struck the management unfavourably.

However, Fox contrived to establish himself in a comparatively dark corner, and chuckled as he saw the two vestrymen contentedly puffing cigars just opposite.

For a thoroughly detailed description of that fight between the "Bristol Darkey" and the local "Marsh Sparrow," I must refer you to the following day's issue of the *Southern Star*, which may be seen on the file at the office. Fox gave no particulars as to place or people beyond the principals, but he was very entertaining concerning the way in which the master of the ceremonies unceasingly requested the spectators to "pit their hands together, gents," and that same gentleman's humourous suggestion of a "collection" at the end of the ninth round "to get a bottle of stove-polish for the Darkey's face," which had become somewhat dilapidated.

Fox had been fairly well hardened by inquests and such-like functions, but he felt relieved when the local "Sparrow" lay on the sawdust completely finished, with both eyes closed up, one ear hanging loose, and his nose a mere sanguinary excresence.

Then he quietly slipped round behind the feverish, shouting crowd—which included the orange-haired barmaid—and darted out into the fresh air.

On his way he had to pass the vestrymen. He resisted a strong temptation to reveal himself to them and hurried on. Another quick change at the shrubbery and Fox arrived at the station about thirty minutes before the train which was to bear his "copy" to headquarters left Marsh Royal station.

During the e thirty minutes he sat in a waiting-room and wrote deliriously. As the train came in he sealed up his "frank," and handed it to the guard with a gasp of relief.

"Ah, how do, Fox?" said a well-known voice behind him.

It was Jimmy Kent with his social "item" also for the guard.

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"What's on to-night—fire—suicide—floods—what is it?" he inquired curiously, for Fox bore a hot, dishevelled appearance, as though he had been running an obstacle race. But a moment was enough for him, so he answered airily:—

"Oh, nothing particular, been up to see an aunt about a tea-cosy," and he winked with a Don Juan-like expression.

"An, naughty, naughty!" said Jimmy, gurgling deeply and wiping the moisture from his streaming eyeglasses.

"Yes, exactly!" concurred Fox absently. Then he used disreputable language to himself behind his coat-collar. He had caught a glimpse of the churchwarden and the drill-sergeant further down the platform. They had evidently not kept their cab, and were going home by the same train as Jimmy Kent and Fox himself, due in a few minutes. Should his rival get within half a dozen yards of those two loud-talking idiots he *must* smell a rat, and then the fat would be in the fire, for the *Dawn* acted royally, and had private telephone wires between the head office and its chief representatives. Jimmy could go home and reel off the whole thing before he went to bed—provided he got the chance.

All this flashed through Fox's brain in a few seconds. His course was clear. He must monopolise the *Dawn* man until he was safe home for the night.

"I saw you go by the club to-night," said Jimmy.

Fox shuddered involuntarily.

"You did—where were you?"

"I was looking out from one of the windows—I'd swear to your straddle anywhere," Jimmy said, complacently lighting a cigarette. "Had half a mind to shadow you just as you did me once, when Sir Tommy was here—only the beastly rain, you know."

"Oh," grunted Fox, wondering if he could lure his companion into the waiting-room and keep him there discussing the texts.

Jimmy Kent's sight was of a peculiar pattern. Had he passed Fox in the street he would probably not have recognised him, but the further an object was from him the more clearly he saw it. It was commonly asserted amongst his brother pressmen that when he read at his lodgings he put the book up in his bedroom and then sat comfortably downstairs and perused it through a crack in the ceiling.

Jimmy Kent wondered long after he got to bed what had come to Fox Kneller that night, ranging furiously as he did from Hypnotism, through Motor-cars, Rudyard Kipling, Socialism, Art and the Drama to parsnip culture, until he made poor Jimmy's head swim, walking him swiftly up and down a section of the platform the while.

When the train came in, Fox rushed his victim into an empty compartment, and after drawing down the blinds, sank suddenly into silence. When they reached their station his electrical behaviour recommenced, and he persisted, to Jimmy's great astonishment, in seeing him home, leaving him at the door with what seemed an almost maniacal laugh.

* * * * *

Next morning at the police-court, Jimmy Kent looked across at Fox Kneller and furtively shook his fist.

"You sweep!" said he, "you and your confounded parsnips!"

"All serene," replied Fox, ostentatiously refolding a copy of the *Southern Star* with "Brutal Prize Fight Last Night" outwards. L. H. HAROLDS.

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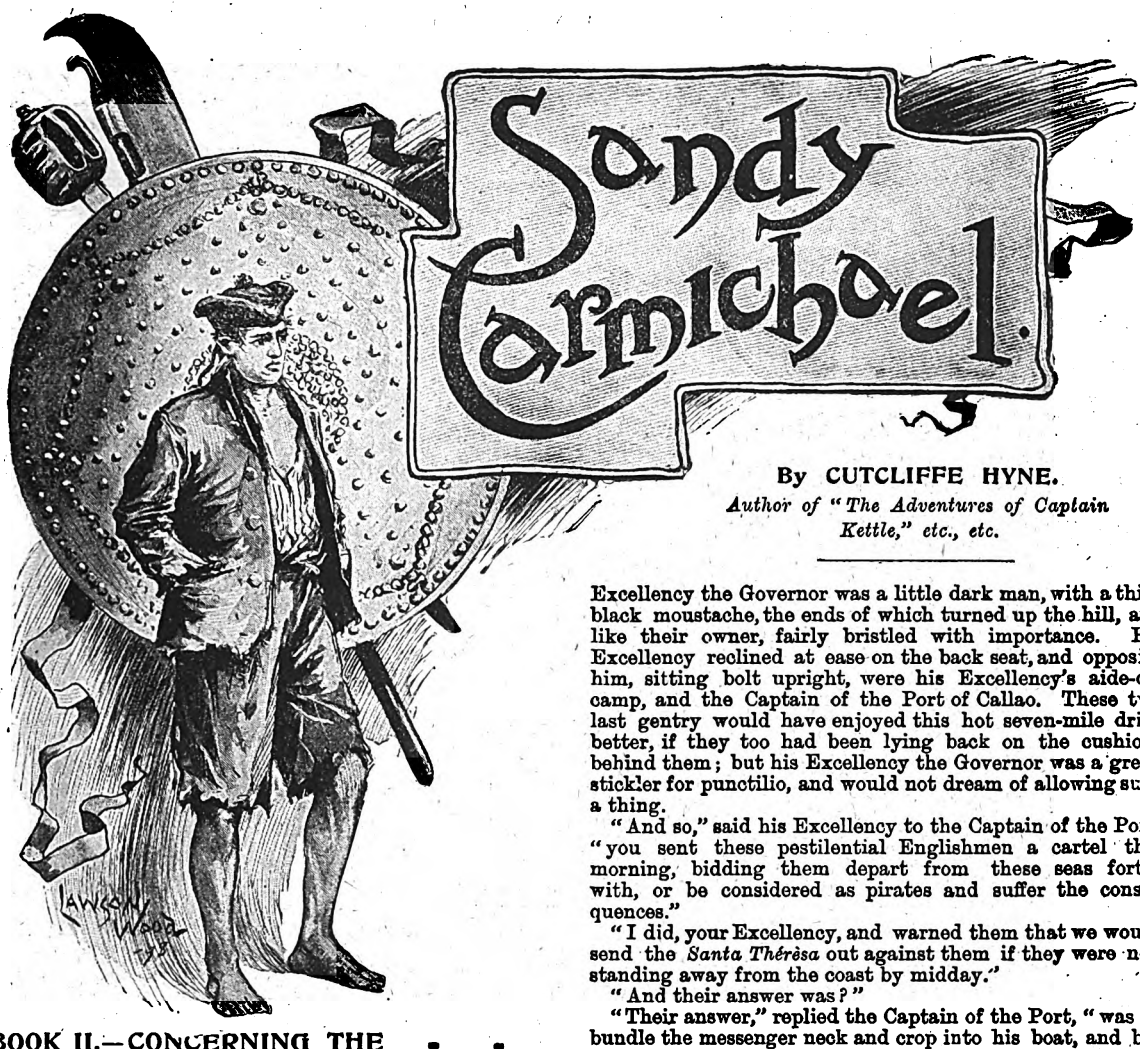

By CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc.

BOOK II.—CONCERNING THE - - VOYAGE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty. They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

The cutter is run down in a fog by a British schooner, giving the fugitives only just time to escape on to the larger vessel as their own goes to the bottom.

CHAPTER I.

How his Excellency the Governor of Lima was bearded by deputy; how he sent out the St. Thérèsa *to work his vengeance; and how that same vengeance recoiled on his Excellency's own head.*

His Excellency the Governor of Lima was coming into Callao as fast as his Excellency's coachman could urge the team of six mules that drew his Excellency's carriage. His Excellency the Governor was a little dark man, with a thick black moustache, the ends of which turned up the hill, and like their owner, fairly bristled with importance. His Excellency reclined at ease on the back seat, and opposite him, sitting bolt upright, were his Excellency's aide-de-camp, and the Captain of the Port of Callao. These two last gentry would have enjoyed this hot seven-mile drive better, if they too had been lying back on the cushions behind them; but his Excellency the Governor was a great stickler for punctilio, and would not dream of allowing such a thing.

"And so," said his Excellency to the Captain of the Port, "you sent these pestilential Englishmen a cartel this morning, bidding them depart from these seas forthwith, or be considered as pirates and suffer the consequences."

"I did, your Excellency, and warned them that we would send the *Santa Thérèsa* out against them if they were not standing away from the coast by midday."

"And their answer was?"

"Their answer," replied the Captain of the Port, "was to bundle the messenger neck and crop into his boat, and bid him go to the nether regions. And as he rowed off, one shouted to him to tell your Excellency—he used terms of opprobrium which I will not sully my lips by repeating—to tell your Excellency that the sea was made for all men, and especially for Irishmen, and maybe Englishmen, and that the King of Spain was a fool to try and lock up an ocean, since there was nothing the men of his country liked better than to use their swords as a key."

"Blasphemous heretic!" exclaimed his Excellency. "If the messenger can point him out, I'll have that man hanged when his ship is taken."

"So it please your Excellency," replied the Captain of the Port, "the messenger said he should recognise the man again; besides which, we have his name. He shouted out a challenge as the messenger left. 'If any o' them big-wigs ashore has the pluck to feel that they're insulted, tell 'om that it's Murtagh O'Neill that's the man to meet 'em wid pistols, hanger, or boardin'-pike, av they'll give him a shtrip of level beach an' fair play.'"

"Murtagh O'Neill," hissed his Excellency. "'Tis an outlandish name, but I shall remember it when the time comes. And the schooner, where is she now? After boasting and bragging, they ran away, I suppose?"

"No, your Excellency; it grieves me to say that she did not. In fact, the accursed vessel is hove-to a mile off the

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Men . . . busily engaged . . . scrubbing clothes.

shore even now. And—and——" the Captain of the Port stammered.

"And what?" snapped his Excellency testily. "Speak out, man!"

"Your Excellency, they have had the insolence to lash a broom to their mainmast head."

His Excellency swore in fluent Spanish that he would chastise these heretics, who had bearded him, before he was a day older, and then inquired whether they were holding themselves in readiness for action. Whereupon the Captain of the Port replied that the pestilential intruders were employing the time in washing their garments, and hanging them up in various parts of the rigging to dry; at which evidence of how little they cared for him or his authority, his Excellency very nearly fumed himself into a fit. By this time the carriage had driven into Callao, which lay at the water's edge,* and his Excellency was able to see how matters lay for himself. Out there beyond the island of San Lorenzo, with its mole and ship-yard, sliding gracefully over the long Pacific rollers below, lay a shapely schooner, hove-to on the larboard tack. She was riding almost stern-on to the shore, and when her bows rose on the swell, one could see her white decks dotted here and there with men leaning over sundry wash-tubs, with sleeves rolled up above the elbow, and hands busily engaged in the homely operation of scrubbing clothes. Above their heads, festooned on lines depending on the rigging, hung sundry grotesque evidences that the occupation had been going on for some time; whilst above all, lashed to a slender spire of wood that the vessel's movements caused to describe cones and arcs of circles in space, was a humble, deck-scrubbing besom, whose significance was beyond misconception.

His Excellency grated his teeth, tugged at his black moustache, abused his underlings, and strutted up and down like an excited bantam cock for some considerable time. Then he remembered the battery on the mole, and ordered its guns to be manned. The English were half-a-mile out of range? Carramba! He always knew them to be cowards. Then the *Santa Thérèsa* must put out and annihilate them.

This being the most obvious order to give, it had been more or less anticipated. The *Santa Thérèsa* was a most majestic and most cumbersome two-decker, built in the year of grace 1634. She had aftercastle and forecastle, barricades, and close-quarters; she had three huge poop lanthorns, each large enough to hold half-a-dozen men, and bulky round tops on her pole masts. Batteries bristled from every part of her, expected and unexpected. In gilding and carved wood-work, she was rich beyond description; and on her stern was a splendid picture of *Santa Thérèsa*, from the brush of a renowned artist. Her early designers had fitted her with courses and topsails only; but the rigger of later days had added a fore and main topgallant; so that now she could spread a goodly show of canvas.

A vessel of this size—she was over twelve hundred tons—naturally requires a heavy crew; and, in view of the emergency, men had been pressed from every craft in the harbour to serve aboard her. These had been bustling about various duties long before his Excellency the Governor put in an appearance; and directly the formal order was given for her to go out and give battle, every available soldier in garrison was marched on board of her. She had her powder on board, and being plentifully supplied with small arms, bullets, round shot, and similar engines of destruction, the Governor said that there was no occasion for her to delay a moment longer.

He felt as though a hot branding-iron was being held against some unseen part of his person. Let her fly at this insolent foreign cur's throat, and worry it to death. The Captain of the Port, who had a brother on board the *Santa Thérèsa*, ventured to suggest that it was unwise to put to sea with no provisions on board, and with water-casks gaping with the drought. But his Excellency snapped him up in the moment. "Do you think," he almost screamed, "that it is a campaign we are entering upon? Do you dare to tell me that yon accursed craft will be floating on the seas at sundown? No; she will be sunk at the first broadside. The holy power of Spain knows how to avenge an insult in a way that makes men chary of boarding her a second time. I tell you, Senor, I will not have that vessel brought in to contaminate His Majesty's harbour of Callao. If she doesn't sink, she shall be burnt. And of her crew, if any chance to be saved, I'll send them to the mines for the remnant of their miserable lives: excepting always that miscreant Murtagh O'Neill, for whom no death can be too bad, however slow and bitter."

Thus, his Excellency the Governor of Lima.

Meanwhile the *Santa Thérèsa* cast off from the mole, and stood across to the shallow spit which forms the other side of the harbour; whence, after a narrow shave of missing stays and going ashore in the surf, she managed to clear the mole, and draw gradually out to sea. The breeze was westerly, and the English schooner lay dead to windward of her. This was unfortunate, for the *Santa Thérèsa* had but little pace except when running free. But there was no help for it, and her commander kept her on down the coast, hoping that she would look up to the schooner on the next tack, and perhaps get the weather-gage of her.

Meanwhile his Excellency had marched solemnly up to the mole, with his suite in dutiful attendance. The road took a considerable circuit, and they were nearly an hour over it; all the time being out of sight of the sea. But as there was no sound of firing, they concluded the action had not commenced.

"She has run away," his Excellency asserted. "She ran the very moment she saw the *Santa Thérèsa* begin to move

* The old town of Callao was destroyed by earthquake in the succeeding year, viz., 1746. The new town lies further inland.

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out of harbour. Cowards! I always did say that the Englishmen could brag and boast with any one, but that they'd never stand up for an equal fight."

But when directly afterwards his Excellency stood up upon the ramparts, and noted that objectionable English schooner in almost exactly the same position she had occupied before, and saw her pestilential crew still occupied with their laundry work, then his Excellency thought within himself that he had been rather premature in his remarks, and regretted having given utterance to them. But he did not own to his mistake aloud. No. He anathematised the impudent schooner with all the power that the Spanish language is capable of. He swore that she was staying on to the last moment out of sheer bravado, and declared that she would turn tail and endeavour to escape ere ever the *Santa Thérèsa* came within gunshot.

His suite remained respectfully and judiciously silent. His Excellency seldom brooked contradiction at all; and in his present mood he would resent it violently. Besides, their own vessel had gone about, and was approaching surely, if slowly, on the larboard tack. She would be in range directly; and if the English schooner did not wait till the last moment, and then show a quick pair of heels—well—she could not avoid capture.

But the English crew phlegmatically continued rinsing and wringing out their spare garments, apparently in no wise disturbed by the great engine of destruction that was bearing down upon them.

The Spaniards on shore could not make it out at all. Here was their huge war vessel almost within the range of her heavier guns, and the intruder did not so much as deign to notice them. Surely there must be some ruse in store. But what could it be? They began to look askance at one another. Spaniards were almost as superstitious then as they were a couple of centuries before, and more than one whisper of "Art-magic," "Aided by their patron saint, the devil," "Infernal agency to fall back upon," and the like was freely passed around.

And certainly, from an onlooker's point of view, it did look uncanny. The schooner was not more than two hundred tons burden, if that; and the Spanish carrack was, as I have said, at least twelve hundred. The one was flush decked, and low in the water. All her men would be exposed to an enemy's fire. The other towered high above the sea, and had almost all her fighting crew snugly ensconced behind stout wooden battlements. The English craft boasted of less than eighty men. The Spaniard had a complement of four hundred, and six times her small opponent's weight of heavy ordnance. Yet the schooner waited, with her crew hard at work washing, and apparently sublimely indifferent to the onset. Truly, from a spectator's gaze-point, there was something mysterious about the affair.

Nearer and nearer the *Santa Thérèsa* drew, and his Excellency, and his Excellency's suite on the mole, could scarcely breathe for excitement. She got within range, and several of the bow guns fired—three or four on either broadside popping off likewise; these last doubtless through accident.

As though touched by a magician's wand, the crew of the schooner seemed to throw off their torpor. The grotesque strings of drying garments came down on the decks in an instant. Up went foresail and jibs. The topsails were let fall and sheeted home. Fore-staysail-sheet was let draw, and before any of the Spaniards clearly knew what was happening, the schooner was passing across the *Santa Thérèsa's* bows, raking her at long range with her starboard battery; not blazing away at random, but firing every gun deliberately, as it bore. The large ship fell into great confusion. Ropes were flying, sails were perforated, and there were a dozen men lying in the crowded 'tween decks killed or wounded. Before they could pull themselves together, "Bang! Crash! Bang! Bang! Crash! Slish! Splinter! Bang!" came another broadside. The schooner had gone about like a top, and repassing close across her antagonist's bows, had raked her at pistol range with the larboard guns. These had been double shotted; but the charges were sufficient for the short distance, and the big Spaniard was riddled like a sieve.

There were a good many men killed, but worse than that (from a fighting point of view) the foremast, wounded by the first discharge, had parted, under the impact of a second shot just beneath the round top, bringing down the small-arm men who were aloft, forecourse, foretopsail, and foretopgallantsail, all by the run, leaving the foredeck in a most unholy hamper of blood, canvas, spars, and rigging. Add to which, the *Santa Thérèsa* forthwith refused to answer her helm, and lay stolidly head to wind, in spite of

His Excellency stood up upon the ramparts.

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all efforts to get her under control again. But she had not given in by any manner of means. Her rigging —what was left of it—was still gaudy with ensigns and banners, that of Spain being conspicuous in no less than three several places; and her commander, whatever his private opinion was of the probable outcome of the combat, had no intention of striking then, if at all. So he ordered the fire to be kept up, and his gunners blazed away with every gun which could be brought to bear, and with a good many which couldn't; thereby keeping their spirits up (through excitement), and doing about as much harm to the schooner and her crew as they would have done to the moon by heaving pebbles at her.

The soldiers were mostly employed as small-arm men, or sharpshooters; and at first they were as wild as the gunners below. But as, so they say, a regiment can always be steadied down if it is only fired into enough—for the survivors learn from the fate of their hotheaded comrades, that coolness and order is an essential—these Spanish soldiers began to see, after an hour's aimless burning of powder, that almost half their number were *hors de combat*, and

A third of the Englishmen was hit.

those that were left thought fit to use their match-locks more circumspectly, and to endeavour not to throw away a shot.

Meanwhile the schooner kept up a heavy fire at long range. Her guns were rapidly served, and accurately trained, and although not to be compared in number with those of the Spaniard, they were of heavier metal, and did ninety per cent. more execution. Indeed, save for a score or so of circular punctures in her canvas, a dozen or so of white splinter marks on bulwarks and lower sides, she was unscathed; and as for her crew, beyond a few trifling scratches here and there, no casualties had occurred amongst them so far.

But when the Spaniard's musketry fire steadied down, first one, and then another, and then a third of the Englishmen was hit; and the captain of the schooner, anxious if possible to lose none of his men, executed a manœuvre which he had mercifully spared the enemy till then, in the humane hope that the *Santa Thérèsa* would strike her colours without such terrible punishment.

With his schooner under full command—for all running and standing rigging had been made good directly it was shot away—he stood on ahead, and hove his vessel to athwart the Spaniard's bows. Half the larboard guns had been run over to the other side, and with this augmented battery he raked the great ship through and through, once —twice—thrice. The four tiny bow-chasers she could bring to bear were dismounted, and their gunners were swept into eternity. The carnage was immense. Flesh and blood could hold out no longer. Down came the gaudy flag of Spain from the peak. The *Santa Thérèsa* was a prize to the English schooner.

A prize crew was sent on board to take possession, and proceeded to try and efface as much as possible the injuries to spars and rigging which they had been straining every nerve to effect during the last few hours; and in the meanwhile the schooner lowered another boat, which put off to shore with a flag of truce. The men pulled round the point of the island of San Lorenzo, and brought up to the mole. The officer in the stern relinquished the rudder-lines, drew his sword, and tied a white pocket-handkerchief to it. Then he stepped ashore, and a lad with a drum slung to his neck followed.

"Strike up, Sandy," said the officer; and the youngster rattled away at the drum. He beat his rat-a-plan with more goodwill than talent, having, to tell the truth, but seldom handled drumstick before; but "the intention was good," as a certain Irishman afterwards remarked, and the pair of them, drum leading, marched up to a group of uniformed men who came down to receive them.

An aide-de-camp stepped forward.

"Do you speak Spanish?" he asked.

"Yes, Señor," replied the envoy.

"Then permit me to have the honour of presenting you to his Excellency Don José de Corrio y Vadez de Bato, the Governor of Lima—er—I did not catch your illustrious name —thank you; Señor Don Laurenzo de Sneyd, a native of the happy island of Ireland—ah, beg pardon—England. England; yes, of course. Stupid of me to make such a mistake."

His Excellency bowed; and Sneyd bowed too. His Excellency inquired after Don Laurenzo's health, complimented him on the share he had taken in the action (whatever that might be), and, in fact, was vastly polite. Sneyd, not knowing quite what to make of this, hinted that he had come on business, and that his time was short, and his captain expected him back on board; whereat his Excellency was pleased to state that everything of his, inclusive of his time, was entirely at the disposal of Don Laurenzo of Sneyd.

"Then," said Sneyd bluntly, "I've come to arrange a ransom for the *Santa Thérèsa*, her crew, this town of Callao, and the shipping that is in the harbour."

This was a tolerably large order, and at first it fairly took his Excellency's breath away. At length he managed to stammer:

"But, Señor, the town and shipping are under the guns of this fort. The *Santa Thérèsa* and the cowards who manned her I am prepared to treat for, but Callao and the shipping——"

A shrug of the shoulders completed the sentence.

"You thought the *Santa Thérèsa* a match for us, your Excellency," replied Sneyd, "or you'd scarcely have sent her out. And as for calling her crew cowards, it doesn't say much for the rest, as you doubtless sent the best you had."

"Señor Sneyd," said his Excellency, "your words are very free."

"Maybe; but they are true, your Excellency. Let me see; we were two hours in beating the *Santa Thérèsa*—— Three hours, do you think, Señor? I give in to you. Three hours be it. Well, if that's the case, I should say we could silence the batteries here, and reduce the fort in about an hour and a half."

"Señor Sneyd," spluttered His Excellency, "I would have you remember that you are in my power."

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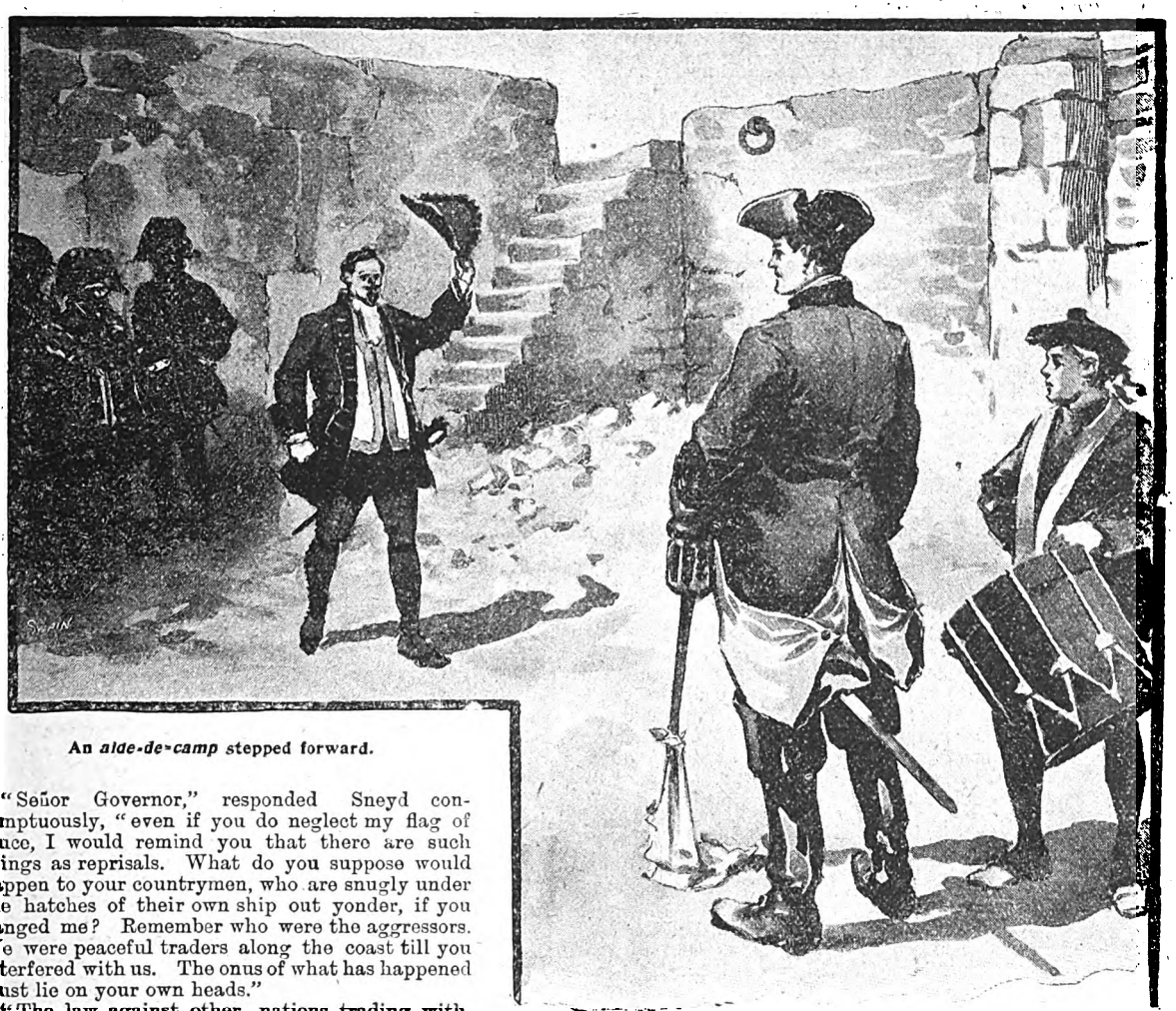

An *aide-de-camp* stepped forward.

"Señor Governor," responded Sneyd contemptuously, "even if you do neglect my flag of truce, I would remind you that there are such things as reprisals. What do you suppose would happen to your countrymen, who are snugly under the hatches of their own ship out yonder, if you hanged me? Remember who were the aggressors. We were peaceful traders along the coast till you interfered with us. The onus of what has happened must lie on your own heads."

"The law against other nations trading with Spanish colonies was passed by my master the King, Señor," interposed his Excellency, who saw that he had made a mistake, and wanted to exculpate himself on some point if possible. "I am but his humble servant. It is my duty to enforce it so far as lies in my power."

"We will not argue that question," said Sneyd, "as we should probably not agree upon it, and time is precious. I am sent here to treat for a ransom for—if it suits your conscience better to consider it so—ship and crew. But mind, the total may seem excessive, for we have town, fort, shipping, and all, totted up in our bill."

"Well, Señor," said his Excellency in a very constrained voice, "what do you assess them at?"

"Two hundred thousand pillar dollars,* your Excellency. Could any of you gentlemen oblige me with a cigarette?"

His Excellency gasped. "Two hundred thousand pieces of eight! Good Heavens! Señor, we have not so much money in the country!"

"As you are a gentleman, I must believe your Excellency although Lima is reported worthy of its name, 'City of Kings,'" replied Sneyd; "but, as I am a gentleman, believe me that we intend to have that precise sum, or its equivalent in specie, by to-morrow midday. If it is not forthcoming—you must take the consequences."

"And the consequences will be, Señor?"

"We haven't contemplated them, your Excellency," returned the envoy drily. "We judged that you would take the wise course, and not force us to extremities. Sacking a town is a very wasteful way of collecting one's revenues, for all parties."

"Señor, I must ask your permission to confer apart with my advisers. If you will accompany my aide-de-camp, he will see to your personal comforts so far as our humble resources permit of."

Sneyd bowed, and followed the aide, who led to a house where a sumptuous meal was laid out in readiness for the Governor.

"We may as well fall-to, Señor," said the aide-de-camp. "His Excellency won't have much appetite just now. Never mind the servants, we'll look after ourselves. Uncork that bottle of country wine beside you, and I think you'll own it's not bad; and let me give you a little of this pie. I can't tell you what's in it, but we may take the contents on trust, as his Excellency is the greatest epicure

* So named from their having the pillars of Hercules stamped on the reverse side. Also spoken of as "Pieces of Eight." Worth about 4s. 3d. The Spanish dourо is the same to-day.

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in all South America. Allow me, as an enemy, though I hope a courteous one, to compliment you on the success of your arms to-day over ours. Considering the numbers engaged on either side, your efforts were something marvellous, and your courage wonderful."

"I thank you, Señor, in the name of my shipmates and myself, but I think you over-rate us. Your side was handicapped. Your vessel was, pardon my saying it, no match for our schooner. It was our fortune to have a craft which outmanœuvred yours, that was all."

"But, Señor Sneyd, that alone could not account for such a crushing defeat as you have dealt us. See the way your men worked."

"Your own countrymen strove just as hard, Señor, but they laboured under the disadvantage of no knowing their ship, their guns, their officers, each other. We perforce, through long herding together, have acquired this trivial knowledge. Send the *Santa Thérèsa* and her complement to sea for a week, and she'd be able to cope with six schooners such as ours, and thirst for more."

With such an interchange of compliment did the meal pass away, each decrying his own countrymen and praising his opponent's. The custom was truly Spanish, and new to Sneyd, but he picked it up quickly enough, and, determined not to be outdone in politeness, capped all the aide's pretty speeches with others even more unveracious and fulsome. Over their cigarettes and coffee, Sneyd artfully drew his companion out about the resources of the country; decried Lima, and got him to give a fairly accurate description of its wealth and prosperity; and so with the other points of interest in the neighbourhood. The Spaniard, jealous for the honour and credit of his adopted country, lauded it to the skies, showing up all its good points in the most favourable light. When he had come to the end of his eulogies, Sneyd said quietly, "Thanks, Señor; your country seems more blessed by nature than any other on earth; Midas would have felt a poor man in Peru; and I do not think that our trivial impost will draw more than a feather's weight from your exchequer's balance."

The Spaniard bit his lip. He saw the blunder he had been led into, but, grasping the fact that what had been said could not be recalled, regained his presence of mind again on the instant. "You English, Señor, are, it seems, our superiors in the gentle art of diplomacy, as well as the rougher art of war," he remarked, with a courtly bow. "Doubtless I should have withheld much of the information which you have so skilfully drawn from me, had I had sufficient forethought to see the obvious deduction you would take from it; but as matters stand you have gained your point, and I can only ask that you will not embroil me with my superiors by saying whence your knowledge of our circumstances was derived."

Sneyd assured him on this point, and went on to say, "In defiance of the embargo which your king has laid upon the vessels of foreign powers doing such a thing, we have been trading all up the coasts, and from the Indians, from the half-breeds, and from your own countrymen have we heard of the great wealth centred in Lima. So, Señor, it was only to confirm their report that I ventured to sound you on the point; and so you may comfort yourself with the assurance that you have told me nothing of vital interest that I did not know before. But here comes his Excellency."

Both Sneyd and the aide-de-camp rose to their feet as the little great man entered.

"I accede to your part of your demand, Señor Sneyd," said his Excellency. "The ransom you claim is beyond my power to deliver. But I faithfully promise to have one hundred and twenty thousand pieces of silver, or their value in uncoined specie, ready for embarkation by midday to-morrow. Think before you reject the offer, Señor," he continued, as he saw Sneyd was about to speak. "The sum is an immense one. By refusing it, you may get nothing at all."

The money . . . was taken on board, counted, and stowed away in the hold.

"And the *Santa Thérèsa* and her crew, your Excellency; what do you suppose will happen to them if our negotiations fail?"

His Excellency shrugged his shoulders. "They must abide by the fortune of war, Señor."

"Then, as your Excellency refuses to accede to my terms, I shall return on board, and my commander will carry out the threat as regards Callao and the shipping which I have had the honour to communicate."

"Your commander may not find the fort on the mole here so easy to reduce as he thought for, Señor Sneyd," sneered the Governor.

"That means you are marching men out of Lima to occupy it?"

His Excellency nodded. "They will be here in half-an-hour, Señor."

Sneyd coolly relit his cigarette. "Would your Excellency oblige me by sending someone to look out to seaward?"

An aide-de-camp left the room, and returning shortly, announced that the English schooner was heading into the harbour. Sneyd imperturbably watched the blue smoke rising from his cigarette. His Excellency's brow darkened. "What does this mean, Señor?" he demanded.

"It means, Señor Don José de Lato, that my captain isn't such a fool as you took him for. He had a man on his foret'gallant-yard from the moment of my landing. That man commanded the Lima road with a glass. He reported a mounted messenger galloping out from here—do I not speak correctly?—The drum beat to quarters forthwith, the guns were cast loose, and the schooner's decks cleared for action. Then the look-out reports that a body of troops is being marched out from the city and is heading towards Callao. The schooner is promptly headed towards the harbour."

His Excellency trembled with rage. "You are a bold man, Señor Sneyd, to beard me thus."

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"As I said before, your Excellency, a flag of truce—and dread of reprisal on the prisoners we hold—are my safeguards."

The Governor of Lima paced up and down the room like a bear in a cage.

"To prevent this bombardment," he said, "how shall I proceed?"

"Send a messenger to bid the soldiers march back again, your Excellency, and order two hundred and ten thousand dollars to be ready for handing over to me by midday to-morrow."

"How, Señor, do you think to trifle with me, and raise your demands in this arbitrary fashion? I would have you know that I, the vicegerent of his sacred Majesty the King of Spain, Governor of Lima, and——"

"Your Excellency, I pray you pardon my interruption, but kindly look through the window at your back. The schooner is just passing the spit, and putting down her helm to run up alongside here. She is handling some of her canvas, if you notice, and in five minutes will be at anchor. Directly after that my commander will open fire. He is not a man who brooks being trifled with."

The facts were apparent; and his Excellency, completely cornered, gave in without further demur. That the impudent little schooner would bombard his fort and town without further parley, if the money was not paid, he felt convinced; and he likewise was pretty tolerably confident that he would still have to find the ransom—perhaps with another substantial sum added to it—all the same.

So he said, "Señor Sneyd, I bow to the force of your stronger hand. My aide-de-camp starts this minute *ventre à terre* along the Lima road, to bid the troops fall back again into the city. The two hundred thousand dollars shall be ready by midday to-morrow."

"Two hundred and ten thousand, your Excellency, and not a maravedi less."

"Señor Sneyd, consider."

"Señor Don José de Lato, I would have you note that the schooner has run down head sails, and will be at anchor the moment way is off her."

His Excellency wrung his hands, vowed he was ruining his province, and promised that the full amount should be forthcoming; and Sneyd, walking smartly out of the room, waved a signal to the schooner to hold her fire.

It was a close thing. The guns had been run out; the men stood by them; linstocks were smoking: it needed only a word of command for the work of destruction to begin.

There came a hail from the schooner, "Are you and the boy all right, Sneyd?"

"All well."

"Are they going to pay up?"

"They promise to."

"D'ye know that a lot of soldier fellows are marching in along the Lima road?"

"Yes, I judged it from your turning up. But there's an order sent post haste for them to march back again."

"Oh, that's as well for all parties. But tell the dons that if they try any more of their 'anky-panky tricks, I'll blow the whole blessed place down about their ears."

Sneyd translated this polite message to the Governor, who had come out to him, and then the captain of the schooner hailed afresh—

"I say, Sneyd! Anybody know English there?"

"No," said Sneyd, "I don't think so."

"That's good. Who's that fat old chap at your elbow? 'Im with the black moustaches that are tickling his eyes?"

"His Excellency the Governor of Lima, with a name as long as the main-halyards. Call him Don José de Lato for short."

"H'm—funny sort of fish. Looks like the frog in the fable, who tried to blow 'isself up till 'e was as big as an ox. Well, tell 'im from me, that I'm going to quarter a boat's crew in that fort of 'is for the hevenin.' It'll take temptation out of 'is way. If the place was empty 'e might 'avo a shy at throwing some men into it after dark, and blazing away at us when we weren't ready for 'em. Say we'll clear out when the stuff's handed over without damaging anything, if we ain't annoyed."

Sneyd toned down the rough edges of the message in his translation, but even in its honeyed form the pill was a bitter one for his Excellency to swallow. It showed that the commander of the English schooner didn't trust him. And what made this all the more poignant, was a strong hint from his Excellency's own conscience that the Englishman was acting very judiciously; for, to tell the truth, his Excellency had been conning over a little piece of mild treachery.

The schooner would lie peacefully at anchor, so he thought, and those of her crew who did not get drunk—Englishmen always tippled heavily in harbour, so he'd been told—those who didn't get tipsy would sleep very soundly after their hard day's work. If the fort could be stealthily manned under cover of the darkness, then he would get the upper hand. The schooner lay directly under the heavy guns of the fort, and before their crew knew where they were, their heretical craft would be sunk beneath them. The glamour of victory would blazon over the means taken to obtain it. Modified somewhat, the move could very well be described as a masterly piece of strategy, and, once he finished the affair successfully, that little mishap with the *Santa Thérèsa* could be easily glossed over or forgotten.

This was something like the outline of his Excellency's scheme, and here this brutal Englishman spoils it. Don José could have wept with annoyance. But he restrained himself. That particularly cool person, the envoy, was waiting beside him for an answer, and reluctantly his Excellency gave the desired concession. There was no help for it. There, in the middle of the harbour, was that infernal schooner showing her ugly broadside, and the gunners were standing beside their pieces, each with a smouldering linstock in hand. His Excellency the Governor of Lima was more neatly pinned than he had ever been in his life before, and as he most devoutly hoped never to be again.

The boat's crew, armed to the teeth, came ashore, amb'ed up to the fort and took possession, as if the doing so were the greatest lark in the world; and the discomfited Spaniards had to look on non-interferent. His Excellency felt himself a ruined man. No amount of twisting and turning could get over the fact that the batteries of his seaport had been occupied by a handful of English free lances. Euphuism has its limits, even in a Spanish officer's despatches. Still, there was no help for it, and so he and his suite sorrowfully wended their way back to Lima to arrange for the ransom.

The money paid—either in specie, or coined dollars—they knew that their incubus would leave them. For, strangely enough, though they would not have hesitated in the least to further their own cause by treachery, and lies, and deceit, they had a perfect confidence that the English would evacuate the place, so soon as ever they had been paid off.

And so it turned out. The money collected from one place and another—from the royal treasury in part, and the balance by loans from the merchants—the money, packed in boxes, was brought down by a string of mules in the early morning, taken on board, counted, and stowed away in the hold; and then after recalling her men from the shore, and hoisting in boats, the schooner weighed her anchor, and, putting out to sea, disappeared into the distance.

(To be continued.)

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A Last Visit.

THEY called her Queen Elizabeth in Burford. No one knew why. Perhaps because she spoke with authority, like an officer in command, or because she was big, bony and imperious.

Possibly, also, because she governed a small kingdom of dumb creatures—hens, dogs, cats, canary birds, parrots—all things dear to an old maid's heart. She ruled these, her subjects, with a rod of iron; she was not given to any weakness of pet names, or loving, caressing words, such as flow so easily from the lips of most women. On the contrary, she governed with authority; she resigned absolutely.

She was harsh of voice, stiff of mein; she brooked neither contradiction, replies, hesitation, illness nor fatigue. She herself was never known to complain, never heard to regret anything, never to envy anyone. "Every one has his day," she said with the conviction of a fatalist.

She never went to church, she despised the clergymen, and hesitated not to express her contempt for all religious observances.

During the thirty years that she lived in the little house, with its tiny garden in front, she had altered nothing. The only change ever made was the implacable dismissal of her little servants when they reached their twenty-first year. There were no futile tears nor regrets wasted over her numerous dogs, cats, birds, when they died off by accident or of old age; she simply dug a little hole in the corner of the garden, threw them in, kicked the dirt over them, and calmly found a new subject to fill the place of the departed one.

Her few acquaintances in town were among the families of clerks employed in the neighbouring town during the day. Occasionally these people invited her to have tea with them. She invariably fell asleep at all these festivities, and had to be aroused when the time came to go home. No one was ever allowed to accompany her by day or night. She never appeared to care for children.

She spent her time like a man—carpentering, gardening, cutting wood with a saw or chopping it with an axe, keeping the old house in repair, even doing a mason's work when necessary.

She had two sisters, Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Wood, the one having married a dealer in medical herbs, the other a man of small independent means. These people came to see her twice a year. The Briggses had no children. The Woods were blessed with three—Harry, Margaret, and Joseph. Harry aged twenty, Margaret seventeen, and little Joseph, only three.

No affection seemed to exist between the old maid and her relatives.

In the spring of 1882 Queen Elizabeth fell suddenly ill. The neighbours called in the doctor. She promptly ordered him about his business. The curate also put in an appearance. She jumped out of her bed, and chased him from the house.

The poor little maid, in despair, made herb tea for her.

After three days in bed, her condition became so grave that the cooper next door had a consultation with the doctor, and thereupon took the responsibility of sending for her relations.

The two sisters, with their respective spouses, arrived by the same train, about ten o'clock in the morning. The Woods brought little Joseph with them.

At the garden gate, the first thing they saw was the little maid, leaning disconsolately against the side of the house, and weeping bitterly.

The dog lay asleep in the sun. The cats lay stretched at full length on either window-sill, their eyes shut, their tails extended. A big hen, surrounded by a brood of chicks, clucking noisily, strutted about the yard. A big cage hung against the wall, covered over with chickweed, and in it a number of birds were singing themselves hoarse in the joyous brightness of the spring morning.

The doves, in another cage, sat tranquilly side by side on the perch.

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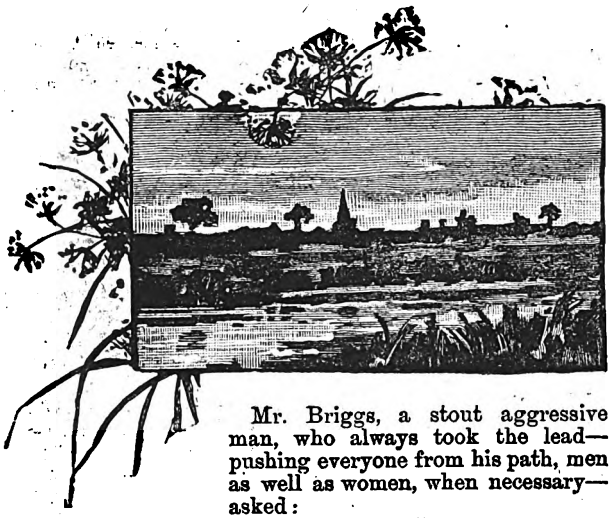

Mr. Briggs, a stout aggressive man, who always took the lead—pushing everyone from his path, men as well as women, when necessary—asked:

"Well, Clara, things going badly?"

The little maid sobbed through her tears:

"She doesn't know me now. The doctor says the end has come."

They all looked at each other. Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Wood silently embraced. They were very much alike, these two women; they always dressed their hair alike, and wore red dresses and French bonnets of an amazing hue.

Briggs turned to his brother-in-law, a little, pale, jaundiced-looking man, who also, added to his other misfortunes, limped painfully, and said seriously:

"Ah! Just in time!"

But no one had yet dared to enter the chamber of the dying woman, which was on the ground floor. Even Briggs, always so consequential, ceded, for the time, the right of way. It was Wood who finally decided to enter first, forging along with the see-sawing motion caused by his lameness, and making the pavement ring with the iron ferrule of his stick. The two women next ventured, and Briggs brought up the rear. Little Joseph remained outside, beguiled by the sight of the dog.

A ray of sunlight lay across the bed, lighting up sharply the hand which twitched nervously, opening and shutting continually. The fingers moved as if animated by some fixed idea. The angular form lay rigid under the sheet. The eyes were closed.

The relatives formed a half-circle round the bed, watching, without speaking, the heaving breast and laboured breathing. The little maid followed them, still weeping. At last Briggs said:

"Tell me exactly what the doctor said."

The girl sobbed.

"To leave her alone. Nothing can be done," she replied.

All at once the old maid's lips began to move. She seemed to be saying to herself thoughts hidden in the dying brain, and her hands moved strangely.

Suddenly she spoke in a little thin voice scarcely recognisable—in a voice that seemed to come from afar, from the depths of this lonely creature's heart, possibly.

Briggs walked off on tiptoe, pained at the spectacle. Wood, whose crippled leg fatigued him, sat down.

The two women remained standing.

Queen Elizabeth continued to babble rapid, unintelligible words. She uttered many strange names, calling to them softly and tenderly. "Come here, my little Edith, kiss mamma. You love your mother? Tell me, child. You, Rose, must watch over your little sister while I am out. Be sure and not leave her alone, you understand? And you musn't touch the matches."

She was silent a moment, then, louder, as if some one was calling:

"Helen!" she waited a moment and then continued: "Tell your father to come and speak to me before he goes to the office." Then, suddenly: "I am not quite well this morning, dear; promise to come home early. Tell your chief that I am ill. You know it is dangerous to leave the children alone when I am in bed. I shall make a nice dish of curry for your dinner; the little ones love it. Won't Clara be glad?"

She laughed—such a laugh! with a young and happy ring in it.

"Look at Jackie, how funny he looks! All daubed over with jam, the dirty little fellow! Look, dear, isn't he funny?"

Wood, who fidgeted his lame leg, made stiff by the journey, muttered:

"She's dreaming she has children and a husband. The death struggle is beginning."

The sisters, dumb and stupid with surprise, never stirred.

"Won't you take off your bonnets and shawls, and come into this room?" asked the little maid.

They passed out without saying a word, and Wood followed limping, leaving the dying woman in solitude. Having laid aside their wraps, the women sat down. One of the cats left her seat on the window, stretched herself, hunched her back, and jumped into the room and upon the lap of Mrs. Briggs, who began to stroke her.

From the next room came the voice of the dying woman, living over, without doubt, in those last moments, the life she had long imagined and desired; rehearsing for the last time all her longings and dreams.

Briggs, in the garden, played with little Joseph and the dog, with all the pleasure of a man out for a holiday, forgetful of the departing soul.

Suddenly he entered the house and spoke to the maid:

"My girl, get us some dinner. What would you like, ladies?"

They decided on a rump steak and mashed potatoes, and as Mrs. Wood made a motion of searching for her purse Mr. Briggs stopped her, and, turning to the girl, said:

"You must have some money."

"Yes, sir," she replied.

"How much?"

"Fifteen shillings."

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"That is enough. Hurry, my girl, I begin to feel hungry."

Mrs. Briggs, looking out longingly at the garden bathed in sunlight, and at two pigeons coquetting on the roof opposite, remarked in a dismal way:

"Such a pity to be here under the circumstances. It would be lovely in the country to-day."

Her sister sighed without answering, and Wood, possibly dreading the suggestion of a walk, muttered:

"My leg hurts me awfully."

Little Joseph and the dog made a terrible noise, the boy shrieking in the excitement of play, the dog barking furiously; they tore round the little garden, chasing each other wildly.

The dying woman continually called her children, talking to each in turn, going through the form of dressing them, caressing them, and even teaching them to read.

"Come now, Jackie, say it after me, A, B, C, D. You don't try, dear. Listen, D, D, D. Do you hear? Try again."

"What extraordinary ideas people have at such moments," Briggs remarked.

Mrs. Wood asked: "Would it not be better to go and sit by her?" But Mrs. Briggs dissuaded her.

"What is the use? You can't do her any good. We are of quite as much use here."

Wood fidgeted, and banged his stick on the floor.

The other cat entered, tail in air.

One o'clock struck before they sat down to dinner.

They had scarcely tasted the wine when Wood, who had been ordered to drink Burgundy, and only of the choicest vintage, called the servant.

"My girl, is there nothing better than this in the cellar?"

"Yes, sir, there is the wine that has always been served to you when you were here before."

"Well, bring us three bottles."

They seemed to enjoy the wine; not that it was anything very fine, but it had been fifteen years in the cellar. Briggs, smacking his lips pronounced it "good wine for an invalid."

Wood, possessed with a strong desire to have the wine for his own use, asked of the maid: "How much of it is still in the cellar?"

"Oh, a lot of it, sir. Mistress never drank any of it."

He then turned to his brother-in-law.

"If you don't mind, Briggs, I would like to make an exchange with you for this wine. It suits me admirably."

Joseph and the dog, having satisfied their hunger, went back to the garden.

Queen Elizabeth continued talking, but now in a lower voice: the words were barely audible.

When they had finished their coffee, they all returned to the sick room to ascertain the condition of the patient. She appeared to be calm.

They left her alone again and sat in the garden to better digest a good dinner.

All at once the dog tore about the chairs, rushing in and out, holding something in his mouth. The child chased wildly after him. Both disappeared in the house.

Briggs fell asleep in the sunlight.

The dying woman began to talk aloud. All at once she cried out.

The two women and Wood hurried in. Briggs awoke but did not stir; he disliked such scenes.

She was sitting up in bed, a wild look in her eyes. The dog, to escape pursuit, had leapt up on the bed, jumped over the poor thing, and entrenched himself behind the pillows. He looked at his little comrade with shining eyes, ready to begin the fray again. He held in his mouth one of his mistress's slippers, all in rags from the rough play.

The child, frightened by the woman who had so suddenly confronted him, stood still, gazing at the bed.

Queen Elizabeth cried with a piercing voice:

"No, no, I will not die. I will not. I will not. Who will bring up my children? Who will take care of them? Who will love them? No, no, I cannot, I cannot. I——"

She fell back. All was over.

The dog, still full of excitement, jumped to the floor, bounding about.

Wood ran to the window, and called his brother-in-law: "Come, quick! Come, quick! She's gone!"

Then Briggs arose, and resuming his usual important air, stalked into the death chamber, saying:

"Thank goodness, it's over!"

GEORGE MARRYATT.

"WAS your ship crippled by the storm?" asked the reporter. "She was not," replied the captain, "though she lost all her hands."

HAZEL: "Weren't you awfully afraid the first time you crossed the ocean?"

Nuttie: "Well—er—for a time I did feel a sort of groundless apprehension."

CUSTOMER: "Tell me, waiter, why do you only recommend stewed tripe to-day. Is it so excellent?"

Waiter (confidentially): "No, it isn't even fresh, but if there's anything left we have to eat it."

"I'D like to know when you are going to pay this bill? I can't call here every day."

"H—m! What day would suit you best to call, then?"

"Saturday."

"Very well; call every Saturday."

"THE only way for a man to learn all about women is to get married."

"And study the ways of his wife, eh?"

"Naw. Listen to what she tells him about the other women."

HAD TRIED THEM.—Little Dot: "Mamma read in a paper that a deaf man in the country was stung by a swarm of bees, and now he can hear as well as ever."

Little Dick: "I don't see how bee-stings could make a deaf man hear—but I should think they'd make a dumb man speak."

IN a Houston family, which was in rather poor circumstances, the arrival of a wealthy aunt was expected. The aforesaid aunt, by some accident or other, had lost a portion of her nose. The children were reminded frequently not to make any reference whatever to the defective nasal organ. The wealthy aunt arrived; but she had scarcely taken off her bonnet when the littlest kid in the flock exclaimed:

"Papa, you told us not to say anything about aunt's nose. Why, she hasn't got any nose at all!"

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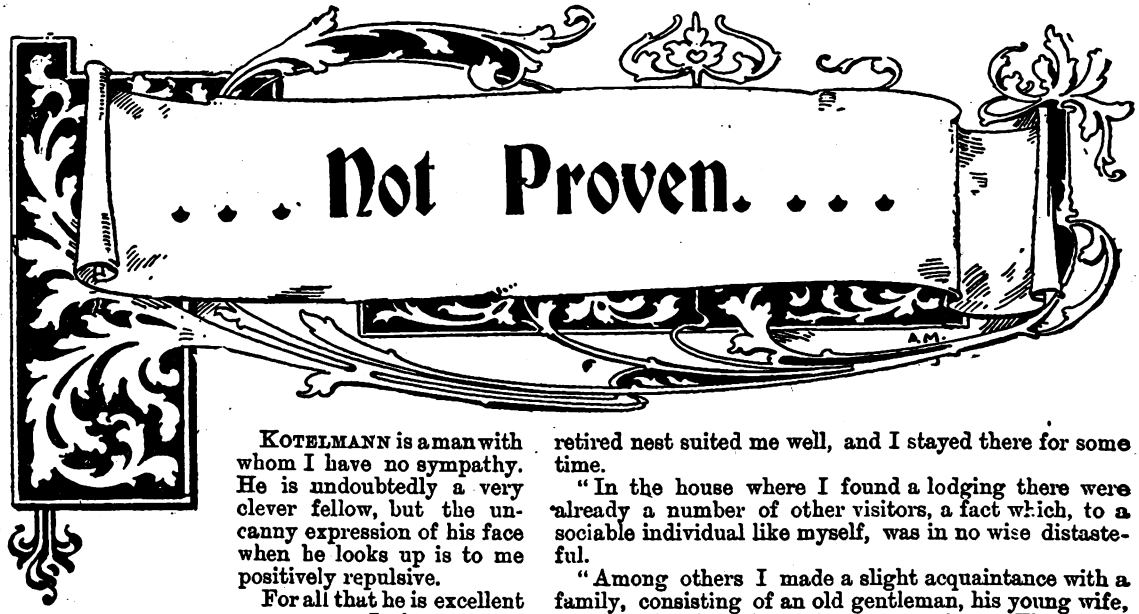
. . . Not Proven. . . .



KOTELMANN is a man with whom I have no sympathy. He is undoubtedly a very clever fellow, but the uncanny expression of his face when he looks up is to me positively repulsive.

For all that he is excellent company. I have spent many hours, many an evening, in his society and must, in fairness, own that I have never found him wearisome or dull.

Not long ago I took a walk with him. As we sauntered through the stubble-fields we discoursed of this and that, and at last we got upon the topic of the latest murder which had been reported in the press.

Kotelmann, as we talked about these things, had the look that always made my hair stand on end. We were discussing the question of circumstantial evidence and its value.

"In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred," I remarked, "there is nothing else to be done but to convict the criminal upon circumstantial evidence. No man in his senses would perpetrate a murder in the presence of an eye-witness."

"Probably not," returned Kotelmann slowly. "That kind of thing is usually done in private. It may so chance, however, that an eye-witness is present of whom the murderer has no cognisance."

After making this remark, he walked by my side for a while in silence, apparently deep in thought. Then he began again, in his characteristic fashion, "One may travel all round the world, and yet never witness a murder. I, however, have seen one."

"What! You—you have seen one!" I exclaimed almost terrified.

Kotelmann nodded assent.

"Explain yourself, man! Was the murderer caught? Was he punished?"

"It was no 'he' it was a 'she,'" said Kotelmann with a laugh. "And as she was not caught, it stands to reason that she was not punished."

"Yet you—" I began. My companion interrupted me. "I had nothing to do with it. My evidence was never called for or required. The thing was accomplished in the neatest and most refined manner possible. If you like, I will tell you the whole story."

I pricked up my ears.

"Four years ago I was spending my summer vacation at the little watering place of B—— This quiet, retired nest suited me well, and I stayed there for some time.

"In the house where I found a lodging there were already a number of other visitors, a fact which, to a sociable individual like myself, was in no wise distasteful.

"Among others I made a slight acquaintance with a family, consisting of an old gentleman, his young wife, and his daughter by a former marriage. The girl, a slim, delicate creature, apparently about twenty years of of age, was blind. She could not be termed pretty, but her personality was indescribably attractive, gentle, and, I may say, pathetic.

"The wife was a beauty! She had a splendid figure, and a pair of grey eyes not easily to be forgotten. I should judge her age to have been about twenty-eight. These people seemed to be in very easy circumstances, and kept themselves as much as possible apart from the other visitors.

"I can boast, as you are aware, of some gift of observation. Although my acquaintance with this family was, as I have already stated, but a slight one, I yet took some interest in studying the different members which composed it. For, wherever I go, I make it a rule to study all the new characters I meet.

"It was not long before I discovered three things concerning this trio. Firstly, that the old man was passionately in love with his wife, but had for his daughter neither eyes, ears, nor heart; secondly, that the daughter had an almost idolatrous reverence for her father, but a secret dislike for her step-mother; thirdly, that the wife had a downright hatred for the other two.

"None of the other inmates of our villa, however, had any suspicion of this state of affairs; to the superficial observer, these three persons appeared to be living together in perfect harmony.

"One morning, the old gentleman did not appear, and in answer to inquiries his wife said that he was ill. In the course of a day a physician was summoned to him, and in the evening our host imparted to me in confidence the distressing fact that the old man had been attacked by typhus fever, and lay now in a very precarious condition.

"The honest Thuringian well-nigh shed tears of chagrin; one would have thought to hear him, that the poor old gentleman had taken the fever out of sheer wickedness and spite, on purpose to give the house a bad name. There was some cause for this lamentation. The secret could not be kept long, and as soon as it became known

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that typhus was in the house, the visitors decamped with all speed. Only two or three, more reasonable than the rest, remained. I have no fear of infection, and when I told our host so I rose prodigiously in his estimation.

"Ten days after the beginning of the old gentleman's illness, I chanced to encounter the doctor, who was just descending the staircase.

"'Well,' said I, 'how fares it with our patient?'

"'Oh,' answered he, 'the symptoms are very favourable. The crisis is over—or all but over. We know, of course, that he is an old man, and his constitution is weak—extremely weak. If he pulls through, as I trust he will, he will have his wife and daughter to thank for it—especially his daughter. That girl is a born nurse; He is asleep now, and upon this sleep depends all.

"'If he awakes of himself in three or four hours' time, then humanly speaking, he will be out of danger. Everything depends upon this sleep! I have impressed upon Herr K., your landlord, the strict necessity of absolute quiet; he will give orders to the servants. Should the patient be frightened, startled out of sleep, there will be a catastrophe. His nervous system is so greatly depressed that the slightest noise in his proximity—such, for instance as the slamming of a door—would, in all probability prove as fatal as a bullet shot into his head or heart. I have warned his wife. Sleep is now everything—everything.'

"With these words the doctor put on his hat and departed. As I stood for a minute in the hall, thinking over what I had heard, Herr K. crept towards me on tip-toe.

"'Listen, Herr Kotelmann,' said he in an undertone. 'Fräulein von P., who was so brave at first, because she had been a Sister of Mercy, left my house early this morning. She took herself off because she was afraid of catching the fever. Are you, then, somewhat superstitious?'

"I laughed.

"'All right,' said he triumphantly. 'I came to tell you that, if you please, you can have the Fräulein's room. You will like its situation so much! It overlooks the whole valley, right away to the forest. You shall have it for the same price as you have been paying.'

"I was delighted.

"'Can I take possession at once?' I asked.

"'This very moment,' replied the landlord; 'the room stands empty. Ah!' he added, 'I forgot; it is next to the sick man's chamber. Will that make any difference to you?'

"I laughed and shook my head.

"'Very good! The room has been cleaned lately, and is quite ready for your reception.'

"I thanked him, and was ascending the stairs, when he softly called me back. 'Pardon me, Herr Kotelmann, I forgot again. The doctor has given orders that on no account may any sound be heard in the neighbourhood of the sick room. He says the old gentleman's life depends upon his sleep being undisturbed. Perhaps you will be so very kind as to defer moving your things until this evening?'

"I expressed myself perfectly satisfied with this arrangement; but as I felt curious to behold my new habitation, especially the belauded view from its windows, I—when the host had left me—stole with light steps along the corridor, opened the door with caution, and entered noiselessly.

"The room had a friendly look, and was large. The view was magnificent. After duly admiring this, I threw an approving glance over walls and furniture. I have already alluded to the fact that I am a keen observer of mankind. I may now add that I am an observer of things as well as persons. I possess the true detective's eye.

"This being the case, I very speedily remarked a weak spot in one of the walls. It was a tiny slit or hole, such as would have been discovered by most persons after a whole day's confinement in the room. A small nail just above it apprised me that the late occupant, Fraulein von P., must have been accustomed to hang some garment there.

"I approached this hole, and peeped through it into the sick man's chamber. The room contained three human beings. On the bed lay the old man in deep sleep. Beside the bed knelt his blind daughter, with clasped hands and bowed head, her whole attitude expressive of intensely earnest prayer. Behind the daughter I saw the wife; she alone was moving.

"In perfect silence, without producing the slightest sound, she was drawing along over the smooth surface of the wax polished floor a small table, whose marble top was laden with quite a dozen medicine bottles, and a number of glass vessels of various shapes and sizes.

"I did not at first comprehend her design. I knew very well that she had received strictest injunctions to make no sound. But when I caught sight of her face! It was the face of a fiend! Never could I have believed it possible that a human face could wear stamped upon it such a horrible expression of murderous hate! In an instant I understood.

"She was in the act of sliding the table into such a position that the least movement of the kneeling girl, absorbed in prayer for her beloved father, would be sufficient to overturn it with its fragile burden.

"I am, as you know, a somewhat cold-blooded fellow, but I can assure you that for the moment I was rigid with horror. I would have given the whole world to have been able to have warned that poor child. But what could I do? A call from me might be as disastrous in its consequences as the catastrophe itself.

"I stood dumb in terror, as if turned to stone. There was no time for thought. Before my whirling brain could suggest any expedient, the deed was done.

"The unhappy girl rose from her knees; with hands clasped, she stood up. I saw the table reel and totter, and as, half swooning, I averted my eyes, I heard the thud of the table and the awful crash of the breaking glass, followed immediately by an ear-piercing, blood-curdling scream."

Here Kotelmann made a pause. After a few moments of silence, he said:

"Give me a light, friend."

When he had lighted his cigar I asked him:

"Did the old man die?"

"He was as dead as though he had been shot through the head," he replied calmly.

Presently he continued:

"I had left the room before the commotion in the house began. It was never known that I was there. It was to me a terrible thought that I must spend the night in that chamber. I am not superstitious, but I must confess that it was long ere I closed my eyes that night.

"And when I did so! Ten times at least I started up from evil dreams with the crash and the fearful cry ringing in my ears. It was a full night before I could get any rest."

We walked on in silence until I spoke again.

"Have you ever heard what has become of the woman?"

"Oh, yes! She has married again; but the daughter, poor thing, died a year after her father." A. Hunt.

A Mother's Vengeance.

I HAD not been at Virelogne for twenty-three years. I went back there to shoot in the autumn with my friend Serval, who had built another cottage there, his first one having been destroyed by the Prussians.

One day I went on, watching my two dogs foraging ahead of me. Serval, a hundred yards away on my right, was beating a field of lucerne. I turned aside the bushes that formed the limit of the forest of Saudres, and I saw a cottage in ruins.

Suddenly I remembered it as I had seen it in 1869; clean, vine-clad, with chickens before the door. What sadder sight is there than a deadhouse, with its standing skeleton, dilapidated and forbidding?

I remembered also that a good woman had made me drink a glass of wine within one day when I was very tired, and that Serval had then told me the story of the inhabitants. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I saw at the time, was a tall, bony fellow, who passed likewise for a ferocious destroyer of game. They were called the Savages. Was that a real name or nickname?

I hailed Serval. He came up with his long stride.

"What has become of the people who lived here?" I asked him.

And he told me this story:

"When war was declared, the son, then thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving the mother alone in the house. The old woman did not receive too much sympathy, because she was known to have money. She stayed all alone in this isolated house, far from the village, on the outskirts of the wood. She was not afraid, for she belonged to the same race as her husband and son—a rough old woman, tall and thin, who did not often laugh, and with whom no one ever joked.

"Mother Savage continued her everyday life in her cottage, which was soon covered with snow. She visited the village once a week to get some bread and a little meat, then she returned to the hut. As there were rumours of wolves, she carried a gun on her back—her son's gun; it was rusty, and the stock worn from constant handling. She was a curious sight, this tall Mother Savage, a little bent, going with slow strides through the snow, the gun-barrel projecting above the black cap, which so effectually imprisoned her white hairs that no one had ever seen them.

"One day the Prussians came. They were distributed among the inhabitants according to the fortune and resources of each. With the old woman, who was known to be rich, they placed four.

"They were four big, light-haired, blue-eyed fellows, who had kept their flesh, in spite of the fatigue which they had already endured, and their good nature, although in a conquered country. Alone at this aged woman's house they were very thoughtful for her, saving her all the fatigue and expense that they could.

"All four were to be seen making their toilets round the well in the morning in their shirt sleeves, wetting their pink-white flesh, characteristic of men of the North, with an abundance of water, in the raw, snowy air, while Mother Savage came and went, preparing the soup. Then they were seen cleaning the kitchen, scouring the floors, chopping wood, peeling potatoes, washing linen, fulfilling all the household duties, like four good sons round their mother.

"But the old woman thought continually of her own boy, with his tall, thin figure, hooked nose, brown eyes, and big moustache. Every day she asked each of the soldiers installed at her fireside:

"'Do you know which way the Twenty-Third French Regiment went? My boy belongs to it.'

"They answered, 'No, not at all.'

"And understanding her pain and anxiety, because they had mothers of their own, they bestowed upon her a thousand little attentions. Besides, she was very fond of her four enemies, for peasants seldom feel the patriotic hatred that is monopolised by the upper classes. The humble—those who pay the most because they are poorest, and whom every new burden overwhelms; those who are killed in masses, forming, because of their numbers, real food for cannon; those, in short, who suffer the most cruelly from the atrocious miseries of war, because they are weakest and least able to resist—seldom understand the bellicose ardour, the excitable feeling of honour, and the pretended political combinations which in six months exhaust two nations—the victors as well as the vanquished.

"The neighbours said, speaking of Mother Savage's Germans:

"'There are four who have found a home.'

"But one morning, while the old woman was alone in her cottage, she saw at a distance over the plain a man coming towards her dwelling. She recognised him as the letter carrier. He handed her a folded paper, and she drew from their case the spectacles which she used in sewing; she then read:

"MADAME SAVAGE.—This brings you sad news. Your boy, Victor, was killed yesterday by a cannon ball that cut him in two. I was standing near, for we marched side by side in the company, and he asked me to notify you in case any misfortune should befall him. I have taken possession of his watch in order to restore it to you at the end of the war. I salute you as a friend.

CESAR RIVOT.

Soldier of the 2nd Class in the Twenty-Third of the Line.

"The letter bore date of three weeks before. She did not weep. She remained motionless, so struck and stupified that as yet she did not suffer. She thought—'There's Victor killed now.'

"Then gradually the tears rose to her eyes, and grief invaded her heart. One by one ideas came to her, frightening and torturing her. Never more would she embrace her child—her big boy; never more!

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"The gendarmes had killed the father, the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon-ball. And it seemed to her that she saw the horrible sight—the head falling, the eyes open, while he bit the corner of his big moustache, as he had been wont to do when angry.

"But what had they done with his body? If they had only restored her child, as they had restored her husband with the bullet in the middle of his forehead!

"But she heard the sound of voices. It was the Prussians returning from the village. She quickly hid the letter in her pocket and received them tranquilly with her usual face, having had time to wipe her eyes.

"All four were laughing with delight, for they brought with them a fine rabbit, stolen, doubtless, and they made signs to the old woman that they were going to have a feast. She began directly the preparation of the breakfast, but when it came to the killing of the rabbit her heart failed her. Yet it was not the first. One of the soldiers hit it a blow behind the ears with his fist.

"She sat down at the table with her Prussians, but she could not eat a single mouthful. They did not heed, but devoured the rabbit. She looked at them side-wise, saying not a word, maturing an idea, her face so expressionless that they noticed nothing. Suddenly she asked:

"'Here we have lived a month together, and I do not even know your names.'

"They understood, not without difficulty, what she wanted, and told their names. That did not satisfy her; she made them write their names on a piece of paper, with the addresses of their families, then, resting her spectacles on her big nose, she considered the unknown writing, after which she folded the paper and put it in her pocket, on top of the letter which told of her son's death.

'When the meal was over she said to the men:

"'I am going to work for you.'

"And she began to carry hay into the garret where they slept. They were astonished at this act; she explained to them that they would not be so cold, and they helped her. They piled up the bundles till they touched the thatched roof, and thus they made a sort of large chamber with four hay walls, warmed and perfumed, in which they would sleep marvellously well.

"At dinner one of them became anxious on seeing that Mother Savage still ate nothing. She declared that she had no appetite; then she lighted a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans went up to their lodgings by the ladder which they used every night.

"As soon as the trap-door was closed, the old woman took away the ladder, then noiselessly opened the outside door, and went to get some bundles of straw, with which she filled her kitchen. She went bare-footed in the snow, so softly that they heard nothing. From time to time she listened to the unequal snoring of the four sleeping soldiers.

"When she judged her preparations sufficient, she threw one of the bundles into the fire, and when it was well aflame, she scattered it over the others, went out, and watched.

"In a few seconds the entire interior of the cottage was illuminated with a raging light; then it became a frightful bed of coals, a gigantic glowing oven, from which gleams shot through the narrow window and threw dazzling rays upon the snow.

"Then a loud cry from the top of the house, followed by a chorus of human shrieks, heartrending appeals of anguish and fear. Then, having burnt through the trap-door, a whirlwind of fire burst into the attic, pierced through the thatched roof, and rose to the skies like an immense torch, and the whole cottage was wrapped in flame.

"Nothing was heard within but the crackling of the fire and the crumbling of the beams. The roof suddenly fell in, and the cottage's glowing carcase shot a great shower of sparks into the air, amid a cloud of smoke. The fields, lighted by the fire, shone like a sheet of silver tinted with red.

"A bell in the distance began to ring. Old Mother Savage remained standing before her destroyed dwelling, armed with her gun—her son's gun—for fear that one of the men might escape. When she saw that all was over she threw her weapon into the embers.

"A loud report rang out. People came hurrying up—peasants, Prussians. They found the woman sitting on a tree trunk, tranquil and satisfied. A German officer, who spoke French like a native, asked her:

"'Where are your soldiers?'

"She stretched out her thin arm towards the red mass of dying fire, and answered in a strange voice:

"'In there!'

"They pressed round her. The Prussian asked:

"'How did it take fire?'

"She answered:

"'I set it on fire!'

"They did not believe her. They thought that the disaster had suddenly made her crazy. Then, as all surrounded and listened to her, she told the story from one end to the other, from the arrival of the letter to the last cry of the men burnt up with the house. She did not forget a single detail of what she had felt or what she had done.

"When she had finished, she took from her pocket two papers, and, in order to distinguish them by the dying gleams of the fire, she again adjusted her spectacles, and then said, pointing to one of them:

"'That is the death of Victor.'

"Pointing to the other, she added, at the same time designating the red ruins with an inclination of her head.

"'These are their names, that their relatives may be informed.'

"She quietly handed the white sheet of paper to the officer, who took her by the shoulders, and she continued:

"'You will write them how it happened, and you will say to the parents that I did it, Victoire Simon, the savage. Don't forget.'

"The officer shouted some orders in German. They seized her and hurled her against the still hot wall of her dwelling. Then twelve men arranged themselves in front of her at a distance of twenty yards. She did not shrink. She had understood; she waited.

"An order rang out, followed immediately by a long report. The old woman did not fall. She sank, as if her legs had been mowed from under her. The Prussian officer approached. In her clenched hand she still held her letter."

My friend Serval added:

"By way of reprisal the Germans destroyed my neighbouring cottage."

As for me, I thought of the mothers of these four kind-hearted fellows burnt in this house, and of the atrocious heroism of this other mother shot against the wall.

L. B. KNIGHT.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER XLVI. (*continued*).

NEITHER guns nor reinforcements were needed, for the lava tide of men flowed back towards the fortifications, and pursuit only ended when an outlying fort took advantage of the yet clear light of a summer's day to send some shells into Sir Drury Lowe's division.

Horror-stricken, nerveless, voiceless, the Café Brigade, as they were cruelly termed by a French general, literally crawled into safety, and in broken fragments reached Paris by sunrise the following morning.

But they had left 12,000 of their number on the green slopes of the Seine Valley. M. Hanotaux mourned contentedly when he heard the news, and M. Rochefort wondered how his deputy colonel had comforted himself.

Harington was not missed until the ambulance had long been busy on the battlefield.

Fate controls coincidence at times, and fate ordained that the corps of nurses headed by Irene and Ethel should be on duty with the field hospital staff provided for that day's engagement.

Inured by this time to the dreadful testimonies of war's unutterable misery, these devoted ladies performed their trying duties with a thoroughness and care that won the praise of the surgeons, and evoked tremulous gratitude from the pallid lips of the sufferers they tended.

Suddenly there came an orderly riding in hot haste towards the Deputy Surgeon-General, who was engaged in probing for a bullet in the shoulder of a Rifle officer.

"Whatever your business, you must wait until the operation is over," she said.

"All right, miss," said the dragoon, saluting; "but I must find somebody to listen to me at once. The Commander-in-Chief wants immediate search to be made for an officer who is a-missing from his staff."

"What is the officer's name?" said Irene, whilst her heart beat painfully, and Ethel looked up from the package of lint she was unfolding.

"Major Harington, miss. Gawd's truth, lady, I didn't know he was a friend of yours!"

The man's ejaculation was natural enough. Irene became deathly pale, and Ethel dropped the parcel in her hands, whilst she gazed, wild-eyed and stupefied, at the messenger.

But Irene was not going to faint at this supreme moment of need.

Her voice was calm as she asked with an almost supernatural effort of her indomitable will: "Did his lordship give you any idea of Major Harington's whereabouts?"

"Yes, miss," answered the soldier, who was genuinely sorry for the manner in which he had blurted out his sad intelligence. "The Major accompanied Sir Drury Lowe in the cavalry charge along with the 17th Lancers, and it is feared he met with some mishap."

"We must search for him at once," went on Irene, in the same reliant tone. "Tell that party of bearers to come here to me, and see if you can get correct information as to the direction taken by the Lancers."

The dragoon remounted to perform this duty, and Ethel, who now clung helplessly to her friend, moaned through her fast-flowing tears: "Oh, Irene, I must come also."

"No, dearest," was the firm reply. "We cannot both desert our duties. This is my task, and mine only. Your work lies here. Bear up, my darling, or my heart will break too soon."

Ethel Harington felt, even in the midst of her grief, that Irene's was the more pitiable state, and she strove hard to comfort her with words of hope.

As the orderly approached with the ambulance bearers, he inquired from one of the men as to Irene's identity.

"That's Lady Vyne, and the other is Miss Harington," was the answer.

"Phew!" whistled the enlightened Tommy. "Hissweetheart and his sister, I suppose. Well, her ladyship's a rare plucked 'un, anyhow."

They found Teddy at last, laid beneath the body of a Frenchman whose skull had been fractured by a kick from the guardman's charger.

Irene, of course, was the first to see him, and she tenderly lifted his bloodstained head whilst the dragoon dragged the Frenchman's corpse aside. In an instant she knew that he still breathed, and then her long pent motion broke forth in a passionate cry of delight that startled the men standing near.

But she soon recovered from the thrill of joy that threatened to be more disastrous than the first shock of pain. Finding the wound, she deftly cut away the matted hair, and satisfied herself that there was no fracture. Harington was insensible from concussion, but the extent of the injury it was impossible to ascertain at the moment.

He was lifted into the litter, and the movement certainly seemed to restore animation, for his breathing quickened and grew stronger. Irene poured a small quantity of brandy into his mouth, and repeated it at slight intervals, meanwhile asking the orderly to ride off quickly and tell Miss Harington that her brother was alive and not much injured, only stunned.

At last Teddy opened his eyes and looked at Irene bending over him. A puzzled look came into his face, but a smile cleared it away, and he murmured weakly: "I know. That's all right."

She kissed him as she whispered: "Yes, dearest, it is all right, but you must not speak yet."

Again he said: "Can't we talk here?"

"No," she replied. "Not here."

Irene did not know what his words meant, but two hours later, when the Deputy Surgeon-General announced to the girls, that after a whiskey and soda and a sound sleep, Harington would want his breakfast, Teddy feebly explained.

He was sure that he had waked up in Heaven, and that Irene, transformed into an angel, was taking care of him.

* * * * *

Next morning there was unusual commotion throughout the British host.

No new attack created excitement, no specially dramatic event elsewhere had thus deeply stirred the troops.

At an early hour it was rumoured and afterwards confirmed that Mr. Thompson, the inventor, had arrived at Havre and was even now on his way to the front. Sure enough, at two o'clock he was driven from the nearest station to the Commander-in-Chief's quarters.

He remained closeted with Lord Roberts and the principal

"What is the officer's name?" said Irene.

members of the staff for a considerable time. Then the whole party drove to the station, where it was seen that the train which brought Mr. Thompson also carried one hundred large and heavy cases. Indeed, several big waggons were filled with them, and the engine-driver informed the officiating station-master that there were "lots more of 'em" on the way at Havre.

One of these cases was opened, and disclosed tier upon tier of Lee-Metford rifles, each with a peculiar-looking attachment mounted on the barrel in the place otherwise occupied by the backsight.

All the officers present were very anxious to examine and test the contrivance, but Mr. Thompson, a very quiet and self-possessed man, in whom one would never recognise the eager enthusiast who sprang to the door of the Prince of Wales' carriage on that memorable day in Hyde Park, said, with a smile: "Gentlemen, you must believe my word for a few hours longer. To-night I will ask you to accept facts, not theories."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR PAUSES.

THERE were now 600,000 British soldiers under arms on German soil.

At Stralsund, Sir Evelyn's force had suffered severely from sickness and the fortunes of war, but reinforcements sent to him in equal proportions from England and America had added 200,000 to his army. He had in all no less than 350,000 men under his command, and still held, beyond the power of dislodgment, the defences of Stralsund. General von Bremen, although in possession of a much stronger force, could do nothing except remain in disastrous impotence before him.

The main German power was established at Wittenburg, that hoary city over which once flew so defiantly the flag of the Reformation. Here, too, the German Emperor had come, eager and restless, to take supreme control. His 500,000 soldiers felt the electric presence of the gallant ruler, although General Grudenau could not conceal his own uneasiness.

"I don't say," he grumbled to one of his staff-officers "that consistency is a virtue; but I *do* maintain that in war it is well to remain of the same opinion for at least half-an-hour."

The fact was that the brave general lived a life of torment and perplexity. He was never certain what new whims or extravagances his impetuous sovereign might not indulge in next. And yet the veteran in his heart loved this fiery Hotspur of the Fatherland, in whose reckless courage and vehement enthusiasm was inspiration enough to inflame a dozen armies. So he endured in silence, and did his work as calmly as he could.

Twenty miles to the west, upon the banks of the Elbe, winding its way towards the great capital of German commerce, lay the British. Under the Duke of Connaught were 250,000 men, of whom 150,000 were English, and the remainder American. Already there had come rumours to the enemy that large additions might still be expected, or were already on their way. The whole Saxon race was now arming itself, and a ceaseless multitude might soon commence to pour through the German Ocean into the northern provinces. And for once the fanatic pride of the empire shuddered beneath the ominous warning, and there came a pause in the wild fury of her new-born militarism.

For far below this fierce surface spirit, this savage appetite which the whirl of national struggle had inflicted upon the German people, there lay the real Teuton character—deep, silent, strong. The true Germany was

homely, peaceful, and domestic, firm in her faith in her own great destinies, and yet spiritual and poetic. She was still the land of Schiller and of Goethe, still the home of arts and sciences, still the calm haunt of philosophy. Her true empire was that of mind, her true necessity that of peace. If of her ancient blood she still inherited fierce passions, vehement in their fury when they were roused, there nevertheless had grown over them the gentler ties of home, of romance, of family, of quiet industry.

The German . . . to drink his innocent beer in scented gardens.

The German loves to do his work, and then in the evening to drink his innocent beer in scented gardens to strains of pleasant music, and he knew that his English cousin was such as he. There was no quarrel between them. The Berliner thought of the Londoner, and this savage war began at last to appeal to him as little less than homicide.

It was friend against friend. Why should *he*, for reason that was not apparent, lay a dagger at his neighbour's throat?

The reports that came to the Emperor's ears were not all quite reassuring. His people remained firm to the cause which he had made their own, but he grew troubled as he began to realise that they had no longer a blind implicit faith in its wisdom or its justice.

He was pre-occupied by these thoughts one beautiful August morning when, in company with General Grudenau, he rode forward to inspect the lines and assure himself of their disposition. The very glory of the day served to heighten his melancholy, and to give a new and strange direction to its anxieties.

For the Emperor himself, though he had given no sign of it, had begun to doubt. He was a bold, hot-headed soldier, given to sudden and impetuous resolutions, inclined to rush headlong into mistakes he afterwards regretted, but at heart filled with the spiritual fervour of his race, anxious to be just, harbouring no petty animosities nor idle jealousies. He loved his country as deeply as her lowliest son, and his devotion was too passionate not to be guilty of magnificent blunders.

By what had he been induced to take up arms against the English people? It was not vain glory or mere lust of personal aggrandisement.

"Germany must make her way to new continents and found new provinces," he had declared to his English mother when she had reproached him with tears. "It is stern necessity, and I cannot hold it back. Shall I be coward enough to shrink from my misson? No! I must be worthy of the sublime traditions of my family. The founder of our race made Prussia great. My grandfather gave Germany her nationality and her pre-eminence. For me the third and noblest task may yet remain—to give to the Fatherland its hope, a new dominion, another empire. I am thrilled at the thought that I too may add a chapter to our glorious history!"

"And if it be inglorious?" questioned the Dowager-Empress.

"Forgive me, mother!" exclaimed the wayward son. "I do not wish to hurt you. You are English too. But kings can have no kinship. They stand isolated from all the ties of blood. My country and her destinies are to me father and mother. I cannot refuse my duty to them."

This reasoning had intoxicated him. He was as a "prophet new inspired"—the dark and horrid prospect of war was glorified in the dazzling sunlight of a splendid purpose.

But now he doubted much, and his mission seemed less clear. As day by day he saw his brave soldiers fall in battle, as he made his visits to the hospitals and saw their sufferings, as he felt the shock beneath which the German artisan and villager were staggering, when he heard of suffering and privation from every part of his dominions, when, before all, he found the war dragging on its pitiless length, with no great meed of glory to himself, rather with his purpose obscured, and perhaps blotted out by the grim and terrible present, his heart sank within him and cruel perplexities tormented him.

A sharp and sudden conflict and then immediate peace—that had been his theory. For a great right to "do a little wrong." But he was not prepared for such heroic answer to his rude challenge. Here was his own country invaded, the British arms everywhere victorious, Paris threatened, Russia helpless and himself struggling with frantic effort to throw off this tireless foe, which daily increased in energy and cunning, and daily became more strong from an infinite empire without. His purpose was already lost, doomed, hopeless. Was he to wait and let the wretched tragedy play on to a disastrous close? He shuddered as he thought of the frightful blow that even victory would deal at his country and his people.

These thoughts surged through his mind as he rode along on that fateful morning in August. Grudenau, noticing his gloomy silence, did not venture to put in a word. At last they got to an eminence whence they saw the white lines of the advance division of his great army, gleaming in the sun, and could note the restless movements of the soldiers, as, like little dots of colour, they flitted about the green plain.

The Emperor gazed for a long time upon the scene and then, turning upon his companion, asked abruptly:

"General, tell me, shall we beat these English?"

Grudenau started at this singular question, then, recovering himself, said:

"Your Majesty, the national greatness of our race and the splendid destinies of the German people leave no doubt that —"

"Stop, sir!" said the Emperor harshly. "I asked you, not as a courtier, but as a soldier."

"Your question is not an easy one, your Majesty," replied the discomfited officer.

"I desire your opinion, General," reiterated the Emperor in determined tones. "And I insist that you shall speak with the utmost sincerity, no matter how unpleasant it may be."

An officer was awaiting him with dispatches.

"I will obey you, sire," was Grudenau's reply. "Germany has not exhausted her armies' strength. She can pour army after army into the field. But ——" here he paused.

"But so can England, I suppose you mean?" exclaimed the Kaiser.

"That is so, your Majesty. England and America can between them, especially now that France is so hemmed in, flood our shores. Great Britain controls and can continue to control the sea. Her supplies are inexhaustible. The fighting must always take place upon our soil, and so far I do not quite see how the situation is to be relieved."

"England will defeat us, you would infer?" asked the Emperor.

"I did not say that," replied the General.

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"What then?"

"Merely that we cannot defeat her."

"It is not a very exhilarating view to take, General," was the Kaiser's comment. "But I thank you. Let us return."

On the way back the Kaiser thought much of his General's words, and he felt the bitterness of their cruel but inexorable logic. Germany might fight on and on, but to what end? At the best it simply meant endless struggles, endless loss, endless misery. And for a policy that was now dead, for ever dead! His generous heart was torn at the thought of all that his beloved land must endure, and endure in silence, through the dark days yet to come.

And then a dull rage filled him as he considered the collapse of his golden dream, that castle in Spain which he had built of hopes so airy. He had thought to do as his fathers had done, to compass a mighty deed that might raise his own name to theirs. But how pitiful it seemed now!

Frederick had spent his days on the battlefield, unweariedly wresting his country's very existence from the rapacious grasp of his enemies. The great Kaiser Wilhelm had united its disordered provinces into one great dominion. He had set out to do battle with the oppressors of Germany, to vanquish an insolent foe, to overturn a neighbour whose very energy was a menace to the integrity of the Teuton empire. And what was it he himself had sought to do? He was fighting with the country nearest his own in kin, with whom he was allied by blood. He had accepted the unholy alliance of a sworn foe. He was struggling with a people with whom he had no quarrel, and whose wise statesmanship had supported and sustained the German cause. He had forgotten ties of friendship and claims of mutual interest. Could any act be less blest, less glorious, less heroic? And this he had done against the settled theory of his country's policy: he had dismissed the founder of the German empire, shunned his warnings, and this was the first fruits of his self-will!

A resolve he had long been pondering quickened in his mind as he galloped along. William was headstrong, but he had one redeeming virtue. He could own a mistake as easily as commit one; and he could make a reparation as splendid as a sin.

When he reached head-quarters an officer was awaiting him with dispatches.

"Stay with me a moment," he said to Grudenau. "I may need you."

Then he opened his dispatches. His brow clouded as he read.

"General von Bremen has certain intelligence that there are considerable reinforcements expected at Stralsund," he observed quietly to Grudenau. "They will enable the English to strike out and make a general advance. More, it is believed that a junction of the two corps will be attempted, and that, on the east at any rate, it will be impossible for us to effectively oppose it—serious news."

Count von Hohenlohe was seen proceeding on horseback to the Emperor's quarters.

"What does your Majesty propose?" asked the General.

"I have decided," replied the Emperor, a trifle pale, but in firm accents. "I have decided to send for the Chancellor in order to discuss the advisability of treating for peace."

The Emperor had come to a singular resolution, one that could only emanate from a mind constituted as his was. It was one that would save his country from many indignities and possible catastrophes. To take the step he meditated needed a man of high-souled courage; and Wilhelm did not shrink from the burden of the responsibility. But first he desired the counsel of his Chancellor.

The camp was on fire with the news. Excitement found a vent in much loud guttural discussion, and many a labyrinthine sentence clamped with compound words was needed to express with ponderous adequacy the general emotion.

The feeling reached an extreme pitch of tension on the following morning when, scorning the ease and luxury of a carriage provided for him, Count von Hohenlohe was seen proceeding on horseback through the town of Wittenburg to the Emperor's quarters.

A sealed private letter from the Emperor William of Germany to Her Majesty the Queen of England.

The Emperor received the statesman at the door of his apartments and greeted him warmly; then, leading him within, proceeded to engage him in long and private conference.

The Count listened respectfully to the views that his eager master poured forth into his ears, and before replying, examined him narrowly on the condition and disposition of his armies. In particular he read closely and repeatedly the advices received with regard to the British movements and numbers.

"Germany, sire," said the Chancellor quietly, "has made a mistake; we must make use of the quickest remedy for the evil that has come upon us."

"Count," replied the Kaiser, "I am honest enough to own myself deceived. I have perpetrated a blunder which I repent with bitterness and self-reproach. I wish to repair my error. Let this fatal blunder not run out its terrible course. As I have explained, we can withdraw with something at least of honour from this war, if we act at once. The issue with us is still uncertain. England will gladly accept, on terms that must, I fear, be favourable to her, an armistice. Later on, we may be compelled to plead for what we can now treat on equal terms. Do you agree?"

The Chancellor looked steadily at his royal master.

"Your resolution, sire," he replied slowly, "is creditable to your heart and your judgment alike. Continuance of hostilities is disastrous to Germany, to her trade, to her commerce, to her happiness, and the lives of her citizens. It may prove fatal. I earnestly agree with your Majesty, and trust you will not delay your wise intentions. But the fault is ours as well as yours."

"I thank you, Count," exclaimed the Kaiser warmly, rising to his feet. "I now want your assistance and advice in drawing up the letter I propose to send."

"The letter?" asked the Chancellor in surprise.

"Yes. I cannot treat with the General of an hostile army. I must still regard my own position where I honestly can. It would be an admission of weakness, a tacit confession of defeat. The Duke of Connaught has no powers to make terms with me. I shall send a letter to London, to the Queen. She is my grandmother, and will gladly lay my proposals before the Council of War."

The Count bowed but made no reply. He followed the Emperor into an inner room.

That afternoon two German officers, approaching the English lines, demanded audience of the Duke of Connaught. On seeing him they asked the favour of transmission, unopened, of a sealed private letter from the Emperor William of Germany to Her Majesty the Queen of England. And that night the letter, intrusted to two English couriers, left on its journey to English shores.

(To be continued.)

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ROBBING A CHILD.

JOHN DRISCOLL had not tasted food for forty-eight hours. He was absolutely penniless. As he walked up Oxford Street, clad in a fashionable suit of clothes, with a shiny silk hat on his head, few people could suspect that he was suffering for want of food.

He pursued his course up the great thoroughfare and finally reached Hyde Park.

Weak and faint, but still maintaining an indifferent mien, he entered the park.

He sat down at intervals and rested his weak limbs, but the act of sitting seemed to remind him more of his hunger.

It is a hard trial for a young, vigorous, and healthy man to go for any great length of time without food, and especially so in a rich, populous city. If he had been dressed in rags, he would have begged, but it was utterly impossible for him to do that with his present appearance.

After a time he found himself in a secluded part of the park. He seated himself on a bench. He reviled his fate—everything. "Oh!" he thought, "how I would like a morsel of food!"

He felt like committing a robbery, or any crime, or doing anything that would bring him food.

A light footstep near him aroused him from his reverie. There, before him, stood a fat, chubby, rosy-cheeked little child, gazing at him with wide, staring eyes. In his plump little hands he held a large home-made pie.

Driscoll started up. The sight of that pie was most tantalising in its effect upon him. How he would like to eat it!

There was no one in the immediate vicinity, no one to observe him. The child was fat and well-fed, and he (Driscoll) was starving.

He arose and approached the child.

"My little man," said he, smiling as graciously as it was possible for him to do, "come here."

"What have you there, my dear?" said Driscoll. "Pie?"

"Eth, thir," lisped the little one.

"Let me see it, baby," he said, but the little one shook his head and held the pie behind his back.

"Come," said Driscoll, "won't baby let me see its pie?"

The child gravely gave a negative shake of the head.

"Please let uncle see it," said Driscoll coaxingly, and at the same time making an effort to take it.

"No, no; me 'ant's it," said the baby.

"Let me have it," said Driscoll impatiently.

The little one made a movement as though to run away.

Tired of importuning the baby and fearful lest its mother or nurse should appear and spoil his opportunity, he suddenly bent his face close to that of the child. Assuming the most diabolical and forbidding expression it was possible for him to do, he hissed out: "Give me that pie; give me that pie quick, or I'll murder and eat you, quick!"

The child gave a terrified scream, let the pie drop at Driscoll's feet and scampered down a side path as rapidly as his short little legs could travel. Driscoll quickly picked the pie up, held it in one hand, which he placed within the breast of his coat, and sauntered nonchalantly away.

He wanted to find some quiet spot where unmolested, he could eat his stolen pie, but everywhere he went he found one or more persons. At length he reached an out-of-the-way corner, and sitting himself on the grass, drew forth his precious pie.

The ridiculousness of the thing now struck him, and he burst into a hearty peal of laughter. He held the pie at arm's length and looked at it. He was just about to place it to his mouth; but, alas and alack, "there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip!" A large Newfoundland dog at this juncture jumped from a clump of bushes, snatched the pie from his hands and bounded swiftly away.

Poor Driscoll!

All the merriment fled from his heart at once. His pie was gone beyond recovery.

"Fate is against me," he muttered sadly as he arose to his feet and walked away.

"Have I got to starve to death surrounded by plenty? It is too hard. Well, I will hold up as long as I have strength."

When he turned out of the park, it was well on in the afternoon. He wandered aimlessly along the streets, scarcely knowing in which direction he was going.

As he passed a certain house he heard a childish voice exclaim:

"Papa, papa, there is the man that took my pie!"

Turning, he beheld the identical little child whose pie he had taken, clinging to the hand of a gentleman, evidently just returning from business.

The gentleman's face seemed familiar, and no sooner had he scanned Driscoll's countenance than he cried out:

"John Driscoll, how are you?"

And at the same time he held out his hand for the other to take. This Driscoll did, and as remembrances came to his brain he recollected an old college chum and a warm friend. "Charley Vaughan," he cried, "I am delighted to see you."

It was a particularly happy evening for Driscoll. After some conversation Vaughan invited him in, and ere long Driscoll related the whole story of the pie over a glass of wine. Vaughan was immensely amused.

He insisted upon Driscoll remaining with him until certain remittances arrived, and lent him a sum of money to tide him over his present difficulties.

As Driscoll remarked, however, it was a fortunate and opportune theft for him to rob Vaughan's child of the pie, for it was the sound of the familiar voice of the child that had caused him to turn involuntarily, which act had led to his recognition.

E. LINDSAY.

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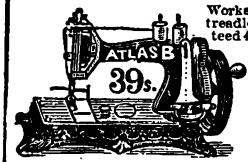

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

RESULT of Jumble Story and Puzzle Picture competitions will appear next week.

G. N.—A boy born on French soil of parents, one of whom may be English, but born in France, is regarded as French, and is liable to conscription. He might, perchance, have to fight against his own brother, if England and France ever went to war, for if the brother was born in England, not even an Anglo-French father could make him French. I trust this explanation will clear up the difficulty for you.

T. N.—You are mistaken; the Cubans are very sober people. They have cafés, but drunkenness is very rare. One of their favourite drinks is composed of white sugar, water, and the white of an egg. If they were fond of alcoholic beverages they would not patronise the one just described to the extent they do.

L. J.—Your friend is right; the famous pear tree near Toulon was destroyed in a gale about two years ago. Its trunk was twelve feet in circumference, and the tree had an authenticated history of six centuries. The proprietor of the ground on which it stood corresponded with all the botanical societies in Europe in order to discover another that could compare with it in age and size, but he could hear of none.

G. M. writes: "Can you tell me the reason why grooms almost invariably make a hissing sound, as if they were blowing through their teeth, when grooming a horse or cleaning a carriage?"——Why, to keep the dust out of their mouths, of course. The groom is a particular man; the horse's coat is dusty after a day's work; the wheels of the carriage are caked with dry mud. Think what a lot of dirt he would swallow in a lifetime if he didn't take care to prevent its entering his mouth.

H. D. B.—The passage of a funeral procession down any road immediately makes that road a public thoroughfare for good and all.

PLAYER.—Yes, golf is certainly increasing in favour in this country, and in others, too. There are no fewer than twenty-two golf clubs in India, five in Egypt, four in Melbourne, eight in New Zealand, and fourteen in Canada. In 1888, the number of well-known clubs was 195, now there are something like 1,500.

B. W.—You are not quite right. Certainly sugar is made from beet-root, but not from the red variety you are acquainted with, but from the white only—that with the green leaves, sometimes called the Sicilian beet.

"WHY do people shrug their shoulders in cold weather?" writes T. P. ——This is the relic of primæval days, when, according to Darwin, the human frame was blessed with a hairy epidermis. All animals with long hair or feathers erect their coats in cold weather, for the warmth of such a covering depends upon its thickness and the amount of air it contains, rather than its bulk.

C. L. G.—The engine of an express train consumes twelve gallons of water for each mile travelled.

R. S. T. writes: "Some time ago I read in one of your publications that it was possible to obtain a male nurse. Can you tell me where I should apply for one?"——I should advise you to write to either of the associations at 69 Wigmore Street, London, W, or 10 Thayer Street, Manchester Square, W.

P. D. N. wants to know the distinction (if any) between a road and a street. ——Strictly speaking, a main thoroughfare should be called a road, and a side turning, whatever the size, a street.

ETHEL G. writes to ask at what age does a woman become an old maid.——So far as I know, there is no recognised boundary line in this country between girlhood and old maidenhood. In France, however, an unmarried woman is an old maid at thirty. She is still a young maid at twenty-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days, but twenty-four hours later she has reached old maidenhood.

C.—The Cabinet was at one time merely a Committee of the Privy Council, and is, according to a legal authority, "unknown to law." But the Privy Council has ceased to meet for purposes of deliberation, and is now really a ceremonial body. In proof of the complete dissociation of the two bodies at the present time, it is pointed out that, whereas the Privy Council cannot meet except under the presidency of the Sovereign, the monarch cannot constitutionally preside at the meetings of the Cabinet.

W. M.—The best gloves in the world are made in Belgium.

MISS G. H. was recently informed that if she really desired to gain any benefit from the wearing of fur on her garments the fur should be on the inside instead of out. She does not care much about this idea, as fur worn in this manner would not be nearly so becoming as it is when worn on the outside, and wishes to know whether this notion is a true one.——You're all right. Actual experiments have been made and have proved that furs conserve far greater heat on the body when the fur is exposed to the air than when the reverse is the case.

ROB.—The largest bog in Ireland is the bog of Allen, stretching east of the Shannon, which covers something like 200,000 acres. Altogether, about one-sixth of the area of the country is bog.

E. W.—So far as the most recent statistics go, the known proportion of mankind who are blind is about one in 1,500, which would give a total of 1,000,000 blind in the world.

T.—There are about twenty metals more precious than gold, but, naturally, we hear very little about them. Iridium, one of the best known of these precious metals, was worth £65 an ounce at one time, but the value decreases as the metal becomes more plentiful. About seven years ago the value of platinum increased to £4 10s. per ounce, and a jeweller offered me a pair of solid platinum sleeve-links at a price that was about a third of the then value of the metal. He did not believe me when I mentioned the price of platinum. Soon after the price fell, and a year later it was selling for less than half. Since then it has been under thirty shillings; but the price fluctuates.

W. E.—The robes of the Speaker of the House of Commons are identical with the official costume of the Master of the Rolls. In former times the two offices were often united.

P.—The water of the River Tinto, in Spain, has the property of hardening and gradually petrifying the things that fall into it. If a stone is thrown into the river and alights upon another stone at the bottom the two gradually become one. Fish cannot live in the water.

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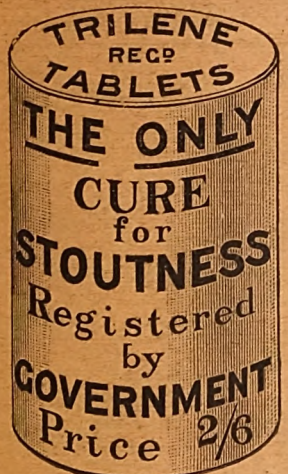
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

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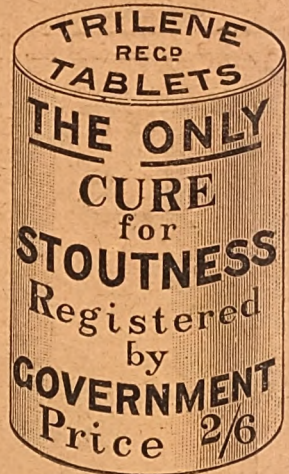

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risceholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1¼ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

Miss B. McKENZIE, of Greenhall, High Blantyre, N.B., says: "Completely cured, being reduced 2st."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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CONTAINS NO ACID

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WILL NOT TARNISH

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"SIMPLE TEST."
Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with that poisonous compound known as verdigris "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green.

"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids when brought in contact with the metal. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.

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RED WHITE AND BLUE

SOLD EVERYWHERE

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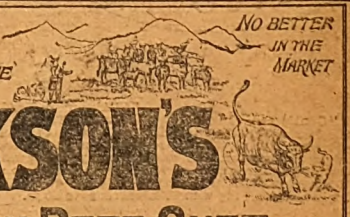
DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST OR AFTER DINNER.

EXTRA REFINED THEREFORE NO WASTE

NO BETTER IN THE MARKET



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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 525. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 21ST, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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The best Beverage for Breakfast, Supper, and all times.

NO DRUGS USED to produce an unnatural stimulant and consequent INSOMNIA.

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Absolutely Pure, Therefore Best.

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"CADBURY'S is the typical Cocoa of English Manufacture"

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Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 525. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 21st, 1899.

CHECKMATE.

"A MAN is an idiot to submit to the lashings of a woman's tongue!"

With this exclamation John Gleddon snatched his hat from the hat-rack, slammed the door behind him, and walked away rapidly down town.

Deprived of the chance for another word, Mrs. Gleddon flew into a passion which it is difficult to describe. She rushed to and fro about the house, with hands outstretched, as if clutching at an imaginary foe (her husband, no doubt), and muttering incoherently. Evidently, the domestic machine was very much out of joint.

At last she was struck with a novel idea. She would pay him out for his cruelty; she would teach him to insult her; she would humble his pride and fill his heart with remorse.

Sitting down at her desk, she penned the dagger which should pierce his soul!

* * * * *

It was late when Mr. Gleddon returned for dinner. Business had detained him, but it had been profitable and his humour was greatly improved. His wife would be sorry, no doubt, for what had passed, he thought, and perhaps would drop a tear or two as evidence of her penitence. He would be generous and forgive her, and allow her to dry her eyes upon the lapel of his coat. Yes, she should have his unconditional pardon.

However, Mr. Gleddon was doomed to disappointment. No penitent eyes met him at the door.

He stepped into the hall and passed on into the dining-room. She was not there, and no dinner awaited him.

On the table was a note. It read as follows:

JOHN GLEDDON.—In the presence of a whole churchful of people you vowed to love, cherish and protect poor little Gladys. Have you done so? No! you have trampled upon my love! You have crushed me with your tyranny! You should have married that red-headed Jones girl, who would have scratched your face and cracked your skull with a rolling-pin. But I will not upbraid you; your conscience alone shall be your accuser. Believe me, there is no malice in the heart which has borne your persecutions. It may console you, in the lonely years to come, to know that you have my pardon for your perfidy—your inexcusable treachery and neglect. If it is not too much trouble you may come down to the foot of Old Graniteside to-night, and rescue from the cold, heartless waters all that remains of little, broken-hearted,—GLADYS.

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As Mr. Gleddon reached the end of the note, his face paled and his hands shook perceptibly.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped, "does she contemplate suicide?"

He was about to rush from the room, when a second thought flashed across his mind. He picked up the note and perused it again, his countenance changing from fear to anger. Making a roll of the note, he struck a match, lighted the paper, and threw it, blazing, into the grate. He then mounted his bicycle and rode away.

* * * * *

Two ladies were sitting in the shade, partially concealed by a thick growth of shrubs and trees which crowned the brow of Old Graniteside. They were enjoying the exhilarating breezes and chatting rapidly.

They were Mrs. Gleddon and her friend Miss Fannie Wagner.

"Isn't it strange that he doesn't come, Fan?" asked Mrs. Gleddon, glancing anxiously in the direction of the town.

"Perhaps he is going to bring a body of men, with drags and an ambulance," replied her companion laughing,

"No doubt; but even then he or they ought to be here before this time. John will not leave my body in the water longer than necessary," said Mrs. Gleddon, shuddering in imagination of such an unpleasant condition.

"What a mean thing you are, Gladys, to frighten him so! He will be nearly distracted."

"Well, I don't care much if he is. It will teach him to treat me with more regard in the future."

"On the contrary, he may never forgive you for treating him so shabbily."

"Oh, no! He will think that I really and truly meant to jump into the water; but that I met you and was persuaded otherwise. It will be easy enough to deceive him. 'Love is blind,' you know. Ha! ha!"

"Then you believe he loves you?" asked Fannie.

"Why, of course, he does; he adores me! That's what ails him. He is so jealous of me that he wishes me to be always petting him, for fear my love will wane. If he loved me less he would not be so peevish."

"And you?"

"Oh, certainly, I like him fairly well. But then, you know, a woman should not be so lavish with her affections; she must be master of herself and her temper. It is the man who is continually betraying himself by his actions, and making a stupid of himself."

"Then you think a woman should not allow her love to manifest itself?"

"Hardly ever. It is always best for a woman to guard her passions and emotions, for once let her take the initiative and sue for favours, and that moment she makes herself a slave to his tyranny."

"Would you have the wife sacrifice her husband's pride?"

"Yes; rather than her own."

* * * * *

At that moment, Mr. Gleddon, tired of eavesdropping and stung by the foregoing conversation, mounted his bicycle and rode away, taking good care that his course should be out of sight of the ladies.

A half-hour later, Mrs. Gleddon despairing of her husband's coming and almost hoping that he had in some manner missed seeing her note, arose and, with her companion, was soon cycling homewards. They had made about half the distance to the town, when they came to a deep hollow of considerable width, and spanned by a rustic bridge.

"What a picturesque scene this is, Fan!" exclaimed Mrs. Gleddon as their machines were gliding over the bridge.

"Yes, it is! But look, Gladys! There is a man down there! Who can it be? What has happened to him?"

Glancing in the direction designated by her friend, Mrs. Gleddon saw a man lying at the bottom of the ravine on a patch of greensward, with his face turned upwards. Not far from him lay his machine.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "it's John! He has ridden off the approach to the bridge and is killed!"

The ladies dismounted from their machines and Mrs. Gleddon, in her excitement, made a movement as if she contemplated following the course taken by her husband, but was restrained by the hand of Miss Wagner.

"Compose yourself, Gladys," she said. "Would you jump to certain death? Perhaps he is not killed after all."

"I tell you he is dead! Look at his white face!" exclaimed the frightened woman. "Come, Fan, let us go to him!"

In a few moments Mrs. Gleddon was kneeling beside the still form of her husband, with her hands placed over his heart.

"He is not dead, but only stunned. Bring some water, Fan! Quick! please!"

Miss Wagner hurriedly soaked her handkerchief in the stream close by, and placed it on the man's forehead. Then they both set to work rubbing his hands, face and chest, while Mrs. Gleddon forgetting her pride and self-restraint, gave vent to her excitement in tears and sobs.

"Oh, my poor hubby! You did come to save me and have lost your own life, perhaps, in the undertaking! See! Fan! How still he lies! Oh, he will never come to, and I have murdered him!"

But Miss Wagner was busily applying the water, and paid little heed to what her companion said.

At last there was a slight jerking of the muscles and something like a moan escaped the man's lips.

"He is coming to, Fan! More water!" exclaimed the excited wife, bending over and pressing her lips to those of her husband.

Another supply of water drenched his head. He sprang to his feet, snatched a handkerchief from his pocket and began mopping the water from his face and neck.

"What on earth are you two simpletons doing with me?" he asked, half in anger.

"Oh, John! are you badly hurt?" asked his wife, with much anxiety.

"Hurt? Well, I should think not!"

"But you know, you rode off the approach, and——"

"Don't you believe it! Just came down here to enjoy a nap in the cool shade, and was pounding away amazingly when you came and woke me up in such a heathenish manner."

"But, I don't understand—the note—didn't you come to the rescue——"

"Indeed not!" said he. "You see, I thought a bath in the cold, heartless water would be just the thing to cool your temper, and——"

But Mrs. Gleddon waited to hear no more.

"You mean thing! Come, Fan," she said.

And away they sped, leaving Mr. Gleddon to follow at his leisure.

GUY LESLIE.

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A NOCTURNAL DRAMA.

As I had expected, the back door was unfastened. I have found that I can nearly always rely upon the inherent carelessness of people for such favours as an unlocked door or an open window.

Pushing open the door I soon gained the hall on the ground floor; I had brought no lantern with me, since I did not anticipate requiring the services of one. Three days previously I had, while ostensibly reading the gas meter, familiarised myself with the plans of the house; and had departed, openly making memoranda in a note-book, presumably as to the amount of gas consumed during the last quarter.

The lights in the lower part of the house were out, except one, and the servants were no doubt in bed. A swinging door, containing a pane of glass set in at a level with my shoulder, opened into the front hall. Through it I saw that the lamp near the door was burning dimly; a precautionary measure, evidently, since I was well aware that all the family were in their rooms.

The occupants of the house were but six in number, and consisted of the master, Mr. Joseph Lodge, a wealthy and liberal manufacturer, his wife, a charming woman, so report had it, whom I had not had the pleasure of meeting, and the servants. Of the latter there were but four, a cook, two maids, and a youth of twenty-two, who looked after the one horse belonging to the family, and had various other duties.

From the vantage of a large shrub, only a few yards from the hall door, I had seen the master and his wife return in the carriage at eleven, alight, and enter the house. Later, I had seen the lights in the two front rooms of the second storey, and later still, at about twelve, I had seen the lights go out. I had kept my post until a quarter to one, and as up to that time no one had left the building by either the front or side doors, I felt very certain of finding Mr. and Mrs. Lodge in their rooms, but whether asleep or awake remained to be determined.

Gentlemen of my profession have a natural antipathy to light while following their vocation, so, with a glance of suspicious enmity at the low-burning gas-jet, I started up the broad staircase, stooping low and steadying myself with my hands on the steps above. At the sixth step I paused and listened attentively. I heard no sound save the loud ticking of a clock close by, and the howl of a dog at a distance. Well content, I started forward again, when — a quick, shrill shriek sent my heart leaping into my throat, and caused me to catch the banisters in fear and trembling.

My first thought was of a burglar alarm; then my nerves quieted down and I realised the meaning of the sound; it was a cuckoo clock hanging on the landing above me. It had struck one o'clock.

With my nerves somewhat unsettled, I crept on again past the clock, and so reached the head of the stairs in the second floor.

All was darkness. To the right of me another flight of stairs led on up to the third storey, where in front of the house was situated a billiard-room, and in the back a garret. With these rooms I had nothing to do, so I turned my attention to Mrs. Lodge's room. From this no light shone anywhere, neither through the key-hole nor from under the door. I stooped and laid a practised ear at the key-hole; not a sound reached it.

I turned to the door opposite. Here, as there, shone no sign of light, but I heard distinctly from within the sound of subdued snoring. I tried the handle. Eureka! I was in luck; the door opened.

Pushing it gently, I crept through and closed it again, all but a few inches.

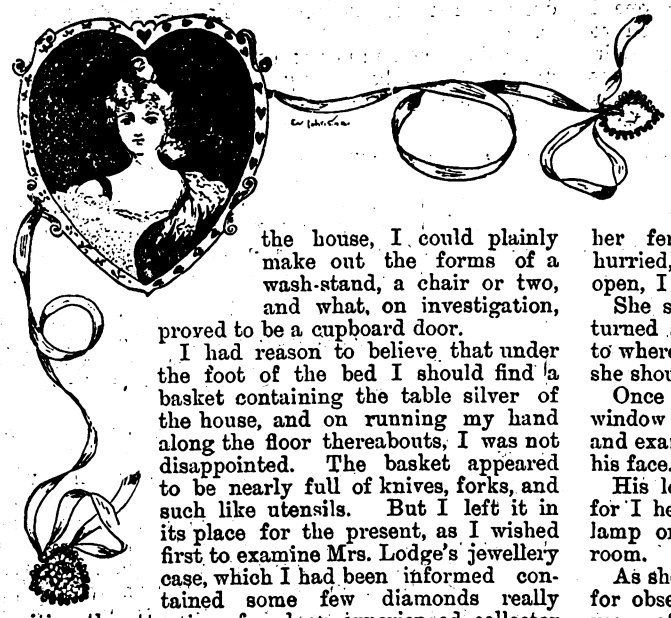
Crossing the room, with a glance at the bed and its inmate, I reached the window on the side of the house, and undoing the fastening, raised the sash a few inches to make sure that egress, in case of hurried flight, was possible there. A pipe would enable me to reach the balcony, and from that escape was easy.

Heavy curtains draped the window at each side. Behind one of these I stepped and looked out.

Below me were the grounds, beyond that the road, with a few scattered residences in sight. The night was cloudy, but not perfectly dark. There was prospect of moonlight later on, for even now the moon was struggling with the black clouds overhead.

I stepped into the room again.

The bed, with its sleeping occupant, was plainly discernable, a great blotch of grey in the half light. I could see no sign of a cupboard or wardrobe in the room, but a door near at hand opened into a dressing-room where, since it was lighted by a window on the side of



the house, I could plainly make out the forms of a wash-stand, a chair or two, and what, on investigation, proved to be a cupboard door.

I had reason to believe that under the foot of the bed I should find a basket containing the table silver of the house, and on running my hand along the floor thereabouts, I was not disappointed. The basket appeared to be nearly full of knives, forks, and such like utensils. But I left it in its place for the present, as I wished first to examine Mrs. Lodge's jewellery case, which I had been informed contained some few diamonds really meriting the attention of such an experienced collector as myself.

The ticking of a watch attracted my attention, and I soon located it on the wash-stand in the dressing-room. From the feeling of it, it appeared to be an ordinary gold watch, with some inscription on the back, and so, perhaps scarcely worth the trouble of disposing of it. Still, business had not been particularly flourishing with me of late, so I dropped the watch into my pocket, resolving not to be too nice in my tastes.

At that moment a slight sound fell on my ears. I paused and waited, but heard nothing more. Then I looked carefully round the corner of the door-post. I could see nothing to account for the noise. The sleeper lay in the same position and snored quietly. I advanced into the room, keeping well in the shadow. Everything was as before. Stay! Surely, there lay a faint line of light under the door across the hall.

I stole to the door of the room, and increased its opening sufficiently to allow my eyes a fair view of the one opposite. There was a light in the woman's room which had not been there when I looked before. It was not strong, and I surmised that she had lighted a night-lamp which would also account for the small noise I had heard. Hesitating whether to remain where I was or to retreat to the convenient darkness of the stairs, I listened for sounds from the room. Presently they reached me—the sounds of footsteps! And coming towards the door.

Even as I drew myself together for a retreat, the light under the door increased in brilliancy, and then suddenly the door was opened and I caught a glimpse, ere I abandoned my position, of a woman in a light coloured gown, holding a night lamp in one hand.

Quickly and noiselessly I stepped behind one of the draperies of Mr. Lodge's window. I preferred to be there rather than in the dressing-room, in case of discovery, since in the latter place I should be cut off from retreat save by way of the window, which I had neglected to examine.

Scarcely had I gained my hiding place when the door of the room was opened, the woman entered, and the door was closed again and locked. I inwardly abused her for a meddling fool, while observing with relief that she had left the key in the lock. She passed where I stood, and I was obliged to draw back and so lost sight of her for a moment.

When I looked again she was at the side window. Putting aside the draperies she raised the lower sash to its full limit. That was the one I partly opened. I thanked her fervently for that; I had preferred, when hurried, a window to a door, and with this one wide open, I could leap to the balcony, if necessary.

She stood looking out for nearly a minute; then she turned and came back to the foot of the bed opposite to where I stood concealed, and I held my breath lest she should hear the sound of my breathing.

Once she started towards me, possibly to put up that window also, but changing her mind, went to the bed and examined the sleeping man, holding the lamp over his face.

His low, regular respiration seemed to satisfy her, for I heard a sigh of evident relief as she placed the lamp on a chair and let her gaze travel about the room.

As she stood there, I found my first good opportunity for observing her. She appeared to be about thirty years of age, tall, erect and with a superb carriage of the head. Her gown revealed in it clinging folds a perfect form. Her hair, black and lustrous, hung unconfined over her broad white shoulder, and her face—but as I looked at her face my heart stopped its beating for an instant.

She was undeniably handsome, with regular features and deep-set, dark eyes, but on her face was such a terrible, inhuman look of repressed agony and dread, that for the moment I thought her insane. Her next actions were but little conducive to a change of opinion.

With a shrug of her shoulders, as though throwing off some qualm of an opposing conscience, she crossed the apartment to the side window, and pulling softly at one of the draperies, soon tore it from its fastenings. This she laid on a chair. Then she took from the pocket of her gown a tiny phial and a cloth. Again she approached the sleeping man and bent over him; he stirred uneasily in his slumber, and I saw her hand cross to her bosom and linger there until he breathed quietly again.

For a time my nerves had played me false, but when I realised that murder was to be done, unless I speedily thought of a way of preventing it, my ordinary composure returned, and I set my mind busily to work.

Quickly but carefully, she applied a portion of the contents of the phial to the cloth and laid it over the sleeper's face; in a moment the sweet, nauseous fumes of chloroform filled the room. The threatened man stirred not. Laying down the phial, after replacing the stopper, the woman seized the drapery from the chair and tore off about a yard of its length. Again she approached the bed; turning down the bed clothes and undoing his night-shirt, she laid her hand over the man's heart.

Already I could perceive a difference in his breathing; the drug was taking effect. I have had some experience with chloroform, and I knew that the quantity already administered would produce no worse effect than a severe headache on waking. But the drug, I was sure, was but the first step; the real drama was yet to be played.

The woman's hand travelled slowly over the bared breast; the other hand went to her bosom; this one I watched. In a moment the hand at her bosom fell to her side. It was her left hand and I could not see it. She bent silently over the bed and listened intently. The house was still. I held my breath; my mind was already made up, and I only awaited the moment to act. Already her hands drew together, when again that clock on the landing below shrieked out the hour! I started violently and the curtain folds undulated. I feared to look out lest she had seen it. Again the clock shrieked. Two o'clock.

I gathered my nerves in hand and peered out. The woman was on the floor; the hand clutching at her heart held a small jewelled dagger; plainly could I hear her laboured breathing; she, too, had been startled by the sounds. For a moment or two she sat there motionless, leaning against the foot of the bed. Then she arose. The dagger was clutched in her right hand now; with the left she sought the opening between the ribs over the heart of the unconscious victim.

She raised the knife; three blood-red gems in the hilt sparkled wickedly in the light. Slowly she lowered it until the point touched the man's breast over his heart. Again and carefully she raised the dagger.

Her back was towards me and I could not see her face, for which I was rather thankful; it could not have been, just at that moment, a pleasant one to look upon. The upraised hand never trembled as it was poised to strike. I thrust the drapery noiselessly aside and stole forward, just as a loud hiss burst from her lips and the knife swiftly descended.

But I had thrust my right arm forward, and as hers struck it the dagger dropped harmlessly from her hand and fell flat on the man's naked breast.

She uttered no sound, but while I might have counted ten, stood erect and rigid. Such moments as those kill, and I, in turn, heaved a sigh of relief when she fell quietly back against me in a swoon.

I half dragged and half carried her to the nearest chair, where she lay inert and lifeless, while I went back to the bed and examined the saturated cloth over the man's face.

As I had thought, the amount of chloroform inhaled was too small to do more than produce profound slumber, so I replaced the cloth lest the sleeper should throw off the effect and wake before my visit was over. The dagger I picked up and examined. It was of foreign workmanship. Six large rubies adorned the hilt, and despite the fact that the thing was intended to serve only as an ornament, the steel was of such quality that I could not bend the blade from its shape. Had it struck a rib, the man's life would not have been spared through the intervention of a bent blade. It was a pretty thing, and I dropped it into a pocket after the watch.

Then I unlocked the door and peered out, listening carefully for sounds of persons moving in the house. All was silent. Our little drama had passed off unheard.

I closed and locked the door again, and seated myself on the edge of the bed facing the unconscious woman, and filled my pipe and lighted it. The odour of the chloroform was still sickening, although the opened window had done much to dissipate it. For several minutes I sat there and thought, watching the smoke clouds float upwards, and keeping an eye on my fair neighbour. Then I went to the window and knocking the ashes out against the sill, placed my pipe back in my pocket, and drew a chair to the small table which stood against the wall.

I had a pencil in my pocket, but I preferred to use a fly leaf from a book lying at my elbow, than to tear a page from the little memorandum book which I carried.

Take a burglar's advice; never sleep again with your door unlocked; danger threatens from within.

I folded the message, and searching under the clothes, folded it firmly in the sleeper's hand. Then I turned again to the woman. A faint colour had returned to her cheeks and an instant later her eyes opened and fell on me.

She gazed at me in silence; then her glance wandered to the bed and its occupant, and she looked long at the latter. His breathing had grown less laboured now. Her gaze travelled back to me, where I sat on the bottom of the bed.

"You—saved him?" she asked quietly. I nodded my head.

"Why?" The question rather staggered me, and I hesitated.

"Why?" she repeated. "What is he to you that you should have interfered? I would have paid you well. I would have given you all that you could have asked; half his fortune would be little enough to pay for his death! He is rich, far richer than even I know of; but I do not want his money."

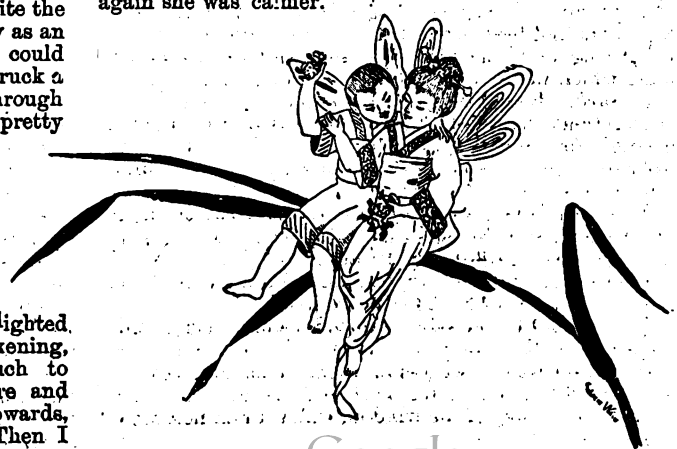
She started from her seat and fell on her knees before me, her arms held out to me in supplication.

"See, there is yet time!" she whispered hoarsely. "The knife! Where is it? What have you done with it?" Her eyes searched rapidly the bed, the floor, my hands. "Kill him! I will make you rich—rich—rich!"

She sank to the floor in exhaustion and looked into my face beseechingly. I shook my head, and I suppose something of the horror I felt found its way to my countenance. She rose unsteadily to her feet.

"You coward! You fool!" she hissed. "What is his life among so many? Are there not thousands of fiends left in the world? Let this one die! Where is the knife? Give it to me!"

Again I shook my head. She dropped her hands and went back to her chair and sank into it wearily, with a look of hopeless misery on her face. When she spoke again she was calmer.



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"Who are you?" she asked.

"My name matters little," I replied; "call me the Hand of Providence."

She took no notice.

"You are a burglar?"

"I have that honour," I said.

"You came for——"

"Your jewels."

"They are in my room; in the second drawer; all save these."

She held out a hand, on the fingers of which blazed three diamonds of immense size and beauty. I looked at them with interest. The sleeve of her loose gown was drawn back from the outstretched wrist, and my gaze fell on something that startled me more than the stones; a white, firm arm, carrying a wheal an inch wide, and purple as though marked with ink.

"What is that?" I asked.

For answer she drew her sleeve further up her arm. Two other similar marks discoloured the fair surface. I looked from them to her face, doubting the evidence of my senses.

"They are nothing," she said, her lips curling with scorn, "only marks of affection from my husband." I shuddered and glanced at the quiet figure on the bed. "They are the least of all; look!"

She tore the gown away from her shoulder. Purple and blue and yellow marks crossed and recrossed there.

"A whip?" I asked.

"A cane," she answered.

"Why?"

"Because it is his pleasure."

"But why do you not get a separation? Surely——"

"He is a devil incarnate. No one knows, not even the servants; he is so careful." She laughed mirthlessly. "Our friends, acquaintances, everyone, think us a model couple. Neglected wives hereabouts hold that fiend up to their husbands' gaze as an example of marital perfection. For months I have laboured to provoke him to strike me before the servants. But no; he is only 'grieved at my conduct.' Once when I expected blows I hid my maid in the cupboard of my room. When he came in he went straight to the door and sent her away; and then I—suffered."

We sat in silence for a moment. I thought of nothing to say, for my blood was hot within me. The clock on the stairs shrieked thrice.

She arose.

"I must go back," she said. "Will you come and take the jewels? They are nothing to me!" I shook my head.

"No," I answered roughly.

I was thankful when she arose and her sleeve fell over those marks; the dagger burnt in my pocket and my fingers itched to have it out; and were it in my hand and those cruel stripes before my eyes, I think, nay, I know for truth, that in another moment I should have buried the knife where it belonged.

"One minute, please."

I arose.

"These things must be put away."

I took up the phial, still half full of chloroform, and hurled it far out of the window.

"A burglar does not leave such things about."

I picked up the torn drapery.

"I suppose you would have bound your hands with this?"

She nodded.

"And gagged yourself with this?"

Again she nodded.

"And how could you have tied your own hands?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I should have done the best I could. In the excitement of the morning no one would have noticed whether the knot was tight or loose."

"I don't believe they would." I laid down the curtain again. The smaller pieces I folded and put in my pocket. I moved the chairs out of their places.

"That is all I think."

She moved to the door. I took the dagger from my pocket.

"And this?" I asked, holding it out to her.

"Keep it," she said. "The stones are of value."

"I will keep it," I answered, "but not for the stones."

I unlocked the door and held it open for her. With lamp in hand, she paused on the threshold.

"Are you proud of what you have done?" she asked wearily.

"No!" I answered under my breath. "I am sorry."

A softer look crept into her face.

"No, do not be. For a while longer my soul is without crime. For that I should thank you."

Impulsively she stretched her hand to me. The sleeve fell away from her wrist. Something came before my eyes like a dim red veil. Dropping to my knees, I pushed back her sleeve and pressed a mad kiss on her arm over one disfiguring wheal.

Then I staggered to my feet and stood before her with lowered eyes, muttering: "Forgive me—forgive me!" over and over again.

She made no answer, and presently I gathered courage to lift my eyes, expecting to find her gone. Instead, my gaze fell on her face, whereon I saw no sign of anger, only a troubled smile, and I think—a faint flush in her cheeks.

"It was nothing," she said simply. "It is only that you are sorry for a woman, and"—a sob crept into her voice—"I am not used to it."

I made no reply. She went out and across the landing and in at her door, and when it had closed upon her I was left in darkness.

For some time I stood there motionless. Perhaps it was a minute—perhaps an hour—I do not know. Then I shook myself together and closed the door and locked it. From the man's face I took away the cloth and put it in my pocket.

Then I remembered his watch, which ticked away in the folds of my coat, and I took it out and threw it on the bed by him. At the window I paused and looked out as I had done nearly two hours before. To the left of the house the sky was growing pink with the first pearly light of the new day.

With one foot on the sill, I hesitated, and then went back into the room.

When again I was ready to depart, I stood outside on the ledge and drew down the window after me. Then I dropped to the balcony and thence to the ground safely, and without noise, and hurried away over the silent road.

And as I went I tossed some bits of torn paper to the roadside.

L. P. HARNEY.

BARBER: "You are getting quite bald, sir. Can't I recommend something for your head?"

Mr. Hurry: "Why, yes; I'd like my hat as soon as possible!"

BOOK II. CONCERNING THE - - VOYAGE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

The cutter is run down in a fog by a British privateer, giving the fugitives only just time to escape on to the larger vessel as their own goes to the bottom.

The Governor of Lima observes a strange craft cruising in his waters, and orders it to take its departure. The crew defy him, however, and he sends the *Santa Theresa* to punish them for their impudence. Unfortunately for him his own men get the worst of it, and Sneyd, attended by Sandy Carmichael, lands and interviews the Governor, demanding an enormous sum as compensation money. This His Excellency reluctantly agrees to pay.

CHAPTER II.

How the snow Fortune's Favourite *of Bristol, proved to be laden with more firearms than a simple trader generally carries: how she cruised on the Spanish Main: and how she manned and dispatched a prize in search of fresh adventure and reward.*

To retrace our steps a little.

It will be remembered that when the little Scotch cutter was run down off the mouth of the Bristol Channel, her crew scrambled on board the vessel that did the mischief, without so much as wetting themselves. It was a touch-and-go case, certainly; but such things are little thought of at sea, provided they turn out prosperously.

The three found themselves on the forecastle of a snow of some three hundred and fifty tons, possessing exactly the weather-stained clothes they stood up in, and, of worldly goods, absolutely nothing besides.

The chief mate of the snow, a squat, grizzled old seaman with a great birth-mark running across his forehead, over the lid of his left eye, and ending abruptly in mid-cheek, accosted them.

"Umph! got aboard safe, 'ave yer? Sarve yer bloomin' well right to bin drownded. Oughter kep' a smarter look-hout, an' showed a flare when ye saw us a-comin'."

"How could his honour see yez?" retorted O'Neill. "The night's as black as the pit, an' as thick as hedge wid dhrivin' rain. If the lubber that's steerin' had shifted his hellum when his honour sung out, you'd a slipped by under our starn aisy enough."

"The chap as was steerin' did bear away all 'e know'd,' grunted the mate, "but she don't answer as easy as hall that. Guess it's nobody's fault. Might 'a' run foul o' hanybody or hanything that's 'andy, night like this. But give us that glim"—a sailor standing by handed him a horn-windowed lanthorn—"and let's see yer. Oo's this ye're callin' ''is honour'? Strike me, but we've got a bloomin' swell aboard!"

He gazed at the tarnished lace on Sneyd's much soiled uniform, with an odd mixture of surprise and annoyance.

"Are you a King's officer, squire?" he asked.

"That depends which king you are talking about," Sneyd answered.

"Don't split hairs now. Are you are a officer of King George, or are you not."

"Emphatically I am not."

"Then what in thunder are you?" asked the fellow, bringing forward the lanthorn again, and looking him up and down afresh.

"One of King James's officers. I was in Prince Charles's army."

"Whew!" whistled the mate; "that's not so bad. I thought you was one o' the hother sort."

"And if I had been?" inquired Sneyd.

"Well, you'd a' found yerself in the wrong shop, that's all."

"I wish," said Sneyd, testily, "you wouldn't be so mysterious. Tell us what the ship is, can't you, and where she's bound to. I've been open enough with you."

"You're aboard the snow *Forchun's Favooryte*, port o' Bristol, Reuben Grum, master, bound for the West Injies, an' per'aps on a bit along the Main—tradin'. That's enough for you. Now tumble down below and turn in. The skipper 'e takes the mawnin' watch, an' 'e'll see ye then. 'E won't want to be disturbed before."

A seaman led them into the forecastle. A single slush lamp swinging from a blackened beam threw out a dull, smoking, reeking flame, which served to do little more than accentuate the darkness beyond its immediate neighbourhood. The air was close and heavy; and there was a mingled odour of bilge-water, oilskins, unfragrant humanity, and newly-greased sea-boots, that would have been very trying to any but a well-hardened stomach; and what with the hammering of the seas without, the snores of many sleepers, and the rattling and sliding about of one thing and another, there was din sufficient to make ordinary conversation inaudible.

It was not a tempting bedroom, thought Sneyd, but not being in a position to find fault, wisely held his tongue, and climbing into the narrow box of a bunk that was assigned

"Strike me, but we've got a bloomin' swell aboard!"

him, pulled the coarse rug he found there up to his chin, and quickly fell asleep.

It was day when he woke, and the forecastle was illuminated with a dusky sort of twilight, that eyes accustomed to the darkness were able to see in with tolerable facility. Several hammocks were still freighted with human occupants, and many of the bunks at the vessel's side were still tenanted. There must have been the best part of sixty men there. And yet this would represent less than half of the crew. The other watch was on deck, and of course there would be a tidy sprinkling of officers aft. Sneyd was tolerably unversed in such matters, but it struck him that the crew was a remarkably heavy one for a vessel of the size; and he began to wonder how a simple trader could find occupation for so many men, when a summons to go aft and be interviewed by the captain, cut short his ruminations.

Accompanied by O'Neill and the boy, Sneyd passed along the waist, where the men were busily employed in scrubbing down decks, and mounted the poop, which was gained by means of ladders leading up from the waist.

Sneyd had pictured to himself the captain of the *Fortune's Favourite* as something like her chief mate, whom he had met over night, and was somewhat agreeably surprised to find himself mistaken. The commander was a short, slight, nattily-dressed little man, in silk stockings, knee-breeches, white kerseymere waistcoat, cut-away coat and gold-laced cocked hat.

He wore diamond buckles on his shoes, and point-lace ruffles showing from out the sleeves of his coat. In fact he was quite a nautical dandy. Sneyd learnt afterwards that "Reuben Grum" was merely the little man's *nom de guerre*—a "purser's name," as it is termed at sea. A cadet of a good English family, he had, as many young men of small fortune did in those days, adopted the sea as a profession; which was to them what Australia was to their descendants a century later.

It meant hard work and rough associates. It might produce nothing more than an arduous livelihood. There were countless contingencies of battle, murder, and sudden death. But to the lucky few, the sea gave ample fortune; and this tempted the ambitious many to try their luck on its hazardous bosom.

"We ran your craft down last night, my men," said Captain Grum, "and I'm sorry for it. The night was thick, and on making strict inquiries, I don't find that my lookout men were to be blamed. It was the fortune of sea, which no one can alter. Now, about your future. I cannot put you ashore, and, from a hint that has come to my ears, I should judge that you would not wish to be landed either in England or Ireland. So you must stay aboard. But as I do not carry passengers, and can allow no idlers on this ship, your names will be entered amongst the crew. I do not know your past experience, but, to concede the benefit of the doubt, you Sneyd, and you O'Neill, will be rated as able seaman, and will receive pay and prize-money as such. Carmichael, you will be entered on the books as boy. You will help the doctor, who tells me that the lad he has at present is a fool. I should tell you that this vessel carries a 'letter of marque,' and you two, Sneyd and O'Neill, will have to drill with pike, cutlass, small arms, and great guns, along with the other men.

"One word more. My list of officers is complete at present, but before the voyage ends it is very likely that there will be casualties. I promote from my own crew; remember this.

"O'Neill, go forward; Carmichael, go to the doctor's

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cabin; and the pair of you set about your duty.—Mr. Sneyd, you have come in through the hawse-holes. So did I, and I am on my own quarter-deck now. I trust I may be able some day to bring you up the poop-ladder. But that depends entirely upon yourself. I make no distinction amongst my men, gentle or simple, save such as they carve out for themselves. You are in the second mate's watch. Go and report yourself to him as ready for duty."

Captain Grum was a martinet, strict with his men, and unbending with his officers. But though he was undoubtedly severe, and visited any dereliction of duty with heavy-handed severity, he was undeniably just, and so his discipline on the whole was not unliked. Our trio philosophically determined to endure a fate which they had no option of altering; and not perhaps on the whole dissatisfied with their chances, settled themselves down steadily and soberly to work.

Sandy Carmichael, whose nationality was unknown even to himself, found himself loblolly-boy to a Scotch surgeon. Dr. Menteith took a fancy to him, first from his name, and then for himself. The bottles and jars of drugs in the cramped little dispensary had each its name written on to a piece of paper which was tied on to the neck, and by studying these Sandy taught himself to read. His letters he knew—they had been instilled into him by some instructor in the forgotten past—and in a week he could tell the name of every drug in the place at a glance. The doctor noted this, and finding him a sharp, handy, useful lad all round, gave him regular instruction for half-an-hour every day. Sandy profited by this to the full, and employed his leisure time in reading and re-reading the doctor's slender library. There was little medical knowledge in those days; but Menteith was quite up to his date, and took a pride in imparting all he knew.

He was quite a nautical dandy.

"Ye'll have a chance o' lairning yer anatomy, Sandy lad, before many days are over," he would say, as he was explaining the use of one or other of his instruments. "A cannon-shot is a rare tool for cutting sections with." At which gruesome suggestion Sandy would nod solemnly and go on with mixing his powder, or rolling up pills, or whatever he was engaged upon. "Ye're just the stolid, steady-fisted, wooden-faced sort o' chap to make a successful operator out of," Menteith would continue, "an' wi' good luck ye should be full-blown ship's doctor after this cruise is done. And mind ye, a ship's a graund school for a young fellow to practice in. There's no second opeenion to call in an' say your treatment's erroneous. Ye're lord an' master o' all the sick and wounded. An' when ye're five-an'-thairty ye may go ashore, powder yer queue, marry, and set up as a respectable general practeetioner."

To which vision of comfort and prosperity, Sandy Carmichael steadily looked forward, and strove earnestly to attain.

Of his companions, the Irishman soon established himself as a general favourite throughout the ship. He knew how to do the work that was required of him, and did it well and when off duty he could sing a good song, and dance jig or hornpipe with anybody.

Sneyd at first was looked rather askance at. The rough fellows who were his shipmates saw that he was their superior by birth from the first glance, and for a while distrusted him accordingly, "We don't want no quarter-deck swells down here," growled one. "The snow's got a full complement o' them, aft." But when they saw that Sneyd gave himself no airs, that he neither pressed into their society nor appeared to disdain it, but spent his leisure hours for the most part in trying to improve himself in a sailor's duties, then they changed their opinion of him, and endeavoured to atone for the first cold suspicion, by aiding and instructing him by every means in their power.

The surly first mate, too—he of the dark red blotch on the face—gruffly volunteered one day to show him how to "take the sun" with a quadrant. "You don't seem as big a thick-'ead as some," that squat little officer informed him, "so you can try yer hand with the quadran' if yer like, an' then see me cypher out the reck'nin' on the slate after. There, don't answer me, but come along and watch."

Nautical instruments were crude in those days, and experience as well as calculation was necessary to tell a ship's whereabouts on the trackless ocean. But the voyage across the Atlantic was a long and tedious one, and before they had made their first landfall, Sneyd, who proved himself an apt scholar, had mastered the working of log-line, compass, and quadrant; knew how to set a course from the chart; and understood how to deal with that delicate instrument, the chronometer.

A sound education stood him in good stead, and in the time it would have taken an unlettered man to master the very first rudiments of the art, he had become a very average navigator.

* * * * *

One day, when they were some two hundred and fifty miles west of Cape Clear, Sneyd was sitting on the lofty forecastle-deck, rope and marlinespike in hand, receiving instructions from O'Neill in the method of manufacturing that nautical mystery known as a Turk's head.

The snow had met with dead head winds during the last week, and was ratching industriously north and south, but making very little headway against them. Those old barrel-shaped craft, with their towering poops and forecastles, with their square bows, and still squarer sterns, with their bellying square sails and general clumsiness, could make very little progress without a wind that was more or less fair. Given the breeze well aft of the quarter, they would surge and wallow along their four or five, or even six knots the hour, but when the breezes headed them, they were philosophically content with not losing ground. Gain it, of course, they didn't, for leeway always counteracted the little they did of eating up to windward. Scurvy would very

likely break out—in fact, it would be very odd if it didn't—but then they expected it. Salt victuals and a long voyage were sure seeds to grow it from. But then, as I say, if it did come, no one would be particularly surprised or alarmed. Men shipped in those days with a foreknowledge of what was before them, just as they do now.

As I have said, Sneyd and O'Neill were sitting on the forecastle-head, the one learning, and the other teaching, the mysteries of a certain knot, which appears, amongst other places, on the foot-ropes beneath the yards.

"Murtagh O'Neill," Sneyd was saying, marking his periods with the marlinspike, "for the fortieth time, I tell you I've dropped the gentleman."

"An' I say yer honour couldn't dhrop it any more than yez could yer head."

"I have dropped it, I tell you. We are both sailors before the mast, and equals——"

"Aquals! Hear him!" cried the Irishman, in tones of fine scorn.

"Well, if there is any difference, it's you who are the superior. Aren't you teaching me now? But anyway I must ask you to call me Sneyd—simply. It only brings me into bad odour with everyone on board, if you persist in using the handle. The men think I want to hold my nose up in the air, and the officers don't like it either."

"Well, your honour——" said O'Neill, scratching his head.

"You are obstinate."

"As a pig being dhruv to Enniskillen fair," replied the Irishman, with a grin. "But what I was goin' for to say's this: that fornenst the other bhoys I'll do as yez bid me, but when we'se alone, I shall just take leave to do as I plaze."

"That's a bargain, now; so remember. There, will this knot do?"

"The bo'sn himself couldn't have turned a nater. Pity that for practice there's not more work of the kind to do. But she's that well fitted there's little of the kind on hand, batin' the twistin' up o' spunyarn and those sort of jobs."

"Yes! I didn't know that traders were as well found as this."

O'Neill's eyes twinkled. "Trade, is it? An' what did yez think we'll be afther tradin' in?"

"Why, what's in the hold?"

"Limestone—ballast. But there's a big powdher room choke full to the beams; lashin's o' shot, round, bar, and grape; half-a-dozen more heavy guns down below; an' as many stand o' small arms, as there are hairs on the back of yer honour's hand."

"Then what's going to be done?"

"We shall run into some snug little bay in the West Indies, have a short spell ashore, then fill up the wather-casks and revictual with *bucan*.* Perhaps the skipper will careen her first. That depends. Anyway, when we're fitted out afresh, we shall set out to cruise. When we meet a Jack Spaniard or a Johnny Portingale, why, then we shall trade round shot and powder smoke for whatever he's got aboard him. And, from what I've heard o' the skipper, there'll be precious few craft on the seas that'd be too big or too ugly for him to tackle."

It turned out much as O'Neill said. After a long and tedious passage, the *Fortune's Favourite* ran into snug anchorage in a little-known harbour in the West Indian islands. Save for a few who were kept to guard the ship, her crew were all given shore leave, and enjoyed it according to their own lights. Some of them were noisy, and when they had got a pint or so of poisonous white rum on board, inclined to be quarrelsome; and there were one or two brawls in which blood was drawn. They were a somewhat unpolished set, these old-time warrior-mariners I do not mean to say that they were brutal ruffians, as were the pirates of a later date; but they were hard, and tough, and coarse-fibred; ready to take shrewd blows or to give them at a moment's notice. They were the outcome of the times they lived in. Our respected great-great-grandfathers who lived ashore were just as bad.

Save for those who were down with scurvy—and these were allowed to remain on shore under Dr. Menteith's and Sandy's care—save for the sick, Captain Grum had all his crew aboard again after they had enjoyed a three days' run; and, sooth to say, most of them were glad enough to set about their duty once more. The chief mate went off with the long-boat, strongly manned, to purchase a supply of cured beef from bucaniers in one of the adjacent islands, and the remaining hands set about refitting the snow.

There was plenty to be done. The holds had to be white-washed, and the ballast retrimmed. The boatswain and his mates were engaged in re-setting up the standing rigging and overhauling the running gear. Then the spare anchors, cables, and heavier guns were sent ashore or lowered into the boats, and the snow was run aground and careened, by strong tackles to her mastheads, so that the long trailing weeds and barnacles might be scraped away, and her bottom left as clean and smooth as possible. Then there was heaps of painting to be done; the water casks to be filled ashore and floated off; the bucaned meat to be headed up in tierces, and struck below; and a thousand and one other jobs which need not be enumerated.

Every man on board had an interest in the prospective prize-money, and worked with might and main, but it was not until three weeks after she had come to her first anchorage that Captain Reuben Grum gave his crew a final half-day's shore leave preparatory to beginning his cruise.

This book is not intended as the chronicle of an eighteenth century privateer's cruise. The work was laudable enough from a patriotic point of view, for the Royal Navy was weak; and had it not been for the warships of private individuals, we might never have broken the naval power of Spain, and the history of Europe would probably be very different from what it is.

So I shall not follow out the various features of the cruise *seriatim*. Suffice it to say, that the *Fortune's Favourite* did not on the whole belie her name. She captured two vessels of her own tonnage, two of slighter burden, and one big fellow of twice her size, who proved after a very tough fight to be laden with crockery, and not worth the powder and shot expended, let alone the human lives. She chased several craft which proved to have the heels of her; she had to run once from a couple

* A word of explanation is necessary here. By an old edict from the Papal See, the King of Spain considered himself sole possessor of the continents and islands of the western hemisphere. Acting on this principle, he strenuously closed his ports to the ships of aliens. The wealth of the new world was notorious, and the men of other nations wished to share it. Of these, the French to a certain extent, and the English more largely, seconded their wishes by vigorous effort. They sent out their ships and sought to take by force of arms what they were not allowed to try for by honest trading. The crews of their ships were drawn from all grades of society, but, once in western seas, their manners were not altogether lamb-like. The Spaniards and the Portuguese treated them like rabid dogs when they got the upper hand; and, somewhat naturally, the English were not over tender when chance or strength gave them the upper hand. Yet little enough was thought of it then. Society now is not what it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.*

The question of victualling was of course a serious one. However, demand is always met by supply. To provision these free-lances, a race of men of mixed nationality sprung up amongst the West Indian islands notably on Cuba. These hunted the wild cattle, and *bucaned* their flesh—that is, smoke-dried it. They themselves were styled *bucaniers*. In time the word got misapplied, and those who consumed the *bucaned* meat—to wit, the seamen-soldiers, who preyed on Spanish commerce—were called "buccaneers."

Just before the time of which I write—in the year 1711—certain of the colonial Spanish ports were thrown open to English shipping by the treaty of Assiento; but the privilege was shortly afterwards withdrawn. The treaty was restored at Aix-la-Chapelle in October 1748, and, in addition, the right was given to send a periodical vessel to the South Seas.

So be it understood:—After 1748, any English vessel which molested a Spanish or Portuguese vessel in time of peace was nothing more or less than a pirate; but before that date, the English vessel was held, by arguments which need not be cited here, perfectly within her right to capture or take a Spaniard in the western seas—if she could.

of frigates; and once, after a tough fight with a schooner and a big new brig, she was beaten off with one third of her crew *hors de combat*.

It was to this engagement that Sneyd owed his elevation to the quarter deck. Captain Grum, as unruffled as if he had gained a signal victory instead of suffering something very like defeat, called him up, complimented him on his day's work before the whole crew, and rated him as third

Some of them. . . . were inclined to be quarrelsome.

mate there and then on the spot, *vice* the former third mate promoted in place of the second mate killed.

O'Neill, too, filled a death vacancy, and found himself, much to his satisfaction, a petty officer, to wit, boatswain's mate.

That night, as they shared the same watch and shared the heavy toil of putting the snow to rights again after the heavy dusting she had received, O'Neill said, "It's capt'n of yer own ship I'll be seein' yer honour before another couple of years are over."

"Maybe," returned Sneyd, "but not commanding a professed privateer. I don't care for the work overmuch. It's exciting and all that, and it's openly winked at by the authorities at home. But we aren't regularly at war with the Spaniards. If we were, I'd fight 'em willingly to the last drop."

"Yer honour is over scrupulous, to my way o' thinking. As for the authorities at home, they'd ha' hanged the pair o' us a few months agone av they could ha' caught us."

"I know that, and I begin to think they were quite right. That rising was a foolish thing. If I had the choice again, it isn't in Prince Charlie's army I should elect to fight."

"For me," remarked the Irishman, "it was a toss-up. I didn't much care which side I was on so long as there was a scrimmage, an' when Sir Thomas Sheridan comes up and says he, 'Murtagh, yez'll bear us a hand; we're agin the Government;' says I, 'Sir Thomas, it's meself's the bhoy to help yez.'"

Sneyd laughed at this naïve political choice, and continued: "I don't mind fighting the Spaniards once in a way, but I can't say I like the idea of making a regular business of it. It demoralises the men; you know that as well as I do. Why, only the other day, when that French brig spoke us off Carthagena, there were a whole lot of them grumbling because Captain Grum didn't have a slap at her. No; what I'd like, and what I intend to do some time, is to start round and go up to the Pacific coast as an honest, respectable trader. If one took out a general cargo, there should be, from what I've heard, a splendid price to be obtained for it. The Spaniards have kept the monopoly so far, and European goods would fetch fabulous amounts in specie and hard dollars. We'd go for honest trading, as I've said, the King of Spain and his confounded withdrawn Assiento Treaty notwithstanding; and then, if they interfere with us, why, it's their own look-out, and the best man licks the other."

"When yer honour tries that thrip, here's me that'll come along wid yez under any ratin' from ship's cook upwards."

It was not long after this conversation that chance threw in Sneyd's way the very opportunity he was looking for. The sturdy bow of the *Fortune's Favourite* was turned towards home. Her hold was full of rich merchandise, and richer rixdollars and specie, and her captain was satisfied with the gleanings of his cruise; when, lo! one night a smart schooner of some two hundred tons ran almost aboard of her. The smaller craft saw her mistake when it was too late, and tried to slip off; but an eighteen-pounder shot which sung through the leach of her mainsail, hinted to her that the snow was not to be trifled with, and so without more ado she made the best of a bad bargain, and hove-to. A boat which went over to take possession sent back word that the cargo consisted of what a Yankee would term "notions"; that is, it was "assorted."

Such a load would certainly not be worth carrying back to Bristol. Captain Grum's face was perplexed. Sneyd went up to him and asked for a few minutes' private conversation. He and the Captain retired to the latter's cabin.

After the lapse of some fifteen minutes, the chief mate was sent for, and the trio of them were closeted together for half-an-hour. Then they came on deck again, and the captain called for all hands. The men came trooping aft, wondering what was in the wind, and Grum addressed them as follows:—

"My lads, this cruise has turned out pretty profitably and you'll all have a tidy amount of prize-money to finger when we square up accounts at Bristol. Still, each man's share will have its limits, and I will confess that I should like to add to mine. So I intend to fit out the schooner yonder with a couple more heavy guns, some more small-arms, and a number of other things we can dispense with, and send her to cruise round the Horn, and up the Chilian and Peruvian coasts. My first mate here will go in command; Mr. Sneyd will be second officer; Mr. O'Neill, third; and Mr. Carmichael (who Dr. Menteith asserts to be thoroughly qualified for such a post) will join as surgeon. You know what the country there is as well as I do. The schooner will probably be back in Bristol river about a year after we get there.

"Now, from here home is clear sailing. We shall meet no enemy, and the snow does not require many hands to sail her, if those few hands put their backs into the work. So now fall into line, men, and take a pace forward those who will volunteer for the schooner."

Nearly nine-tenths of the snow's crew stepped forward with eager stride.

"That's too many. I can't have you all desert me,"

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quoth the captain, with a gratified smile. "Some of the married men had better stand back."

No one stirred; and a voice from the crowd exclaimed, "Faith, sor, av some of us wasn't married 'tisn't here we'd be at all at all;" at which there was a general laugh.

"Well," said Grum, "I leave it to the officers to choose their crew. Captain Gauntlett, you may have ninety men all told, and though I say it, who am not given to praising, you have a rare good batch to pick from."

There was a cheer at this, and then Gauntlett set about making his selection.

All hands worked with a will to tranship to the schooner the heavy guns and their carriages, the ammunition, and the other war like stores with which it was intended to replenish her, and by midday on the morrow the two vessels had separated, after an interchange of frantic cheers, and stood away on their respective courses. The snow headed for England. The schooner bore up for the West Indies, where she could get rid of her prisoners, and lay in store of water, *bucan*, and other necessaries for the long trip round the icy Horn, into the then comparatively unknown waters of the Southern Pacific.

Captain Grum. . . . complimented him on his day's work.

CHAPTER III.

How it was decided to turn for home: how the ambergris was seen: how the black squall came down: how the jolly boat rode it out: and how she fared afterwards.

It was the day after their successful *coup* at Callao, and the officers of the schooner were sitting on their quarter-deck talking and smoking. No shore was in sight. The limitless blue of the Pacific stretched out in all directions, with scarcely so much as a breath of wind to tarnish its polished surface. The schooner had just steerage-way, and the bronzed, bearded fellow at the tiller was guiding her with one lightly placed hand. His other hand every now and again wiped the perspiration which beaded out on to his forehead.

The day was baking hot. There was not a cloud overhead. The vast hemisphere of heaven was blue, blue, blue everywhere, save in one spot almost at the zenith, and there trembled a piercing ball of white light, with a blazing halo round it. The sun's rays reflected off the lazily swelling water, and burnt the skin off one's face into ragged strips. The zephyr did little to temper the heat. Even under the quarter-deck awning, the officers found it almost unendurable. They were lying listlessly about, and every now and again one got up, and drawing a bucket or two of water, drenched himself and his companions.

It was after one of these douchings that Captain Gauntlett spoke.

"No place like 'ome, is there, lads? There's some as say England's a 'ole—hall fogs, an' rain, and general uncomfortableness. But gimme the thickest fog that London hever brewed, rayther than this bloomin' bake-'ouse."

"Will I give yez another souse?" inquired O'Neill who was standing by, canvas bucket in hand, himself dripping like a sea-god.

"No, 'vast for a spell. I'm wet as a fish, an' the water's hot enough to——"

"To bile spuds in," suggested the Irishman. "'Tis meself that 'ud gladly give ten dollars apiece for a dozen big maley ons, an' the schniff of a dacent turf fire to bake 'em over."

"The atmosphere of the British Isles might prove unhealthy for you and me, O'Neill," observed Sneyd thoughtfully.

"Sorra' bit of it, yer honour. We may go home now, and be as quiet as we like, so long as we don't go and make a noise of ourselves,"—after delivering which brilliant opinion, he laid himself down on the hot white deck-planks and joined the rest of the group in endeavouring to doze.

But Morpheus would not be wooed. Phoebus had command of the day, and did not brook divided attention. And so one or other of the group kept getting up and having recourse to the canvas bucket and the tepid sea-water.

"We reckoned this yere cruise to last a year," observed Gauntlett, raising himself on one elbow, and pushing his long grizzled locks back from his face with the other hand, "an' now it's just four months since we parted comp'ny with the snow. Just four months, but we've crammed

a deal into them in the way o' tradin'. 'Tisn't me that thought we'd 'a 'ad the twentieth part o' the luck. Why, she's reg'lar ballasted with dollars, an' bars, an' ingots."

"Had better pay than a bhoy gets turf-cuttin' in the bog," allowed O'Neill.

"But," contended Sneyd, who did not wish the cruise to come to a rapid end, "we haven't got rid of all the cargo. There's some woollen stuffs left and a score or so ot those bells, and a whole lot of cutlery."

"I know," rejoined Gauntlett crustily. "Don't take me for such a fool as to 'ave forgotten that, did yer? I know we could go on. There's a tidy lump o' trade stuff left, and we've height months' vituals at the least, not to mention that Doctor Sandy there 'as enough o' his beastly physics on hand to stop all our hap|etites by one-'arf. But that ain't what I was thinkin' about. Ye see that Callao biz, when all's said an' done, was a bit beyond our size. We 'ad luck, and we 'ad cheek, an' we scooped what we wanted. But that peppery old governor cove hain't agoin' to forget the way we paid our call in a nurry. 'Is blessed dignity was 'urt badly, an' you can lay all you're worth 'e'll be heven with us if 'e can. That blessed *T'resa* 'll be put into commission agin, sailor-fashion this time, 'stead o' soldier-fashion like she was before; an' she'd be a toughish mouthful if she was properly handled. An' besides that, word 'll be sent up and down the coast for other craft to look out for us; big 'uns they'll be too, for, mind you, the Dons have got some heavy vessels in them seas, an' they're not chary o' usin' 'em too, if they're put to it.

"Now, you're wantin' to hear what I'm drivin' at. Well, it's this. You all know old Isaac Gauntlett ain't afeered of a bit of a brush. You all know that 'e'll fight anything that floats if 'e's cornered, and hammer away small arms and great guns, board and repel boarders till the matter's squared one way or t'other. An' when 'e's poor, there's no man sets smaller value on 'is 'ide. But when Ike Gauntlett's got a holy sight of dollars to fall back on, as 'e 'as now, why, then the price of 'is pelt goes up to more for the square inch than many blokes 'ud even guess at. So there, lads; we'll call this a capstan-'ead council, and that's the side my bean's fallin'."

There was a silence, which Gauntlett broke by saying:

"Every man 'is say. Come, Surgeon Sandy, being the youngest, do you begin. If a solemn phiz means brains, you've the levellest 'ead o' the lot of us."

"Personally," said the surgeon, "I'd be for seeing it out here. I've a snug berth, and am not likely to fall into a better. But still I think Captain Gauntlett's proposal a wise one, and for this reason. The crew isn't so strong as it was. We've lost eleven men. Four were killed, two died of their wounds, five have succumbed to sickness for which I could make no cure. And the rest, there are quite twenty who are far from sound. It is my fault to a large extent, I daresay. I have done my best, but with so little experience——"

"Belay that, Surgeon Sandy," said Gauntlett, with rough kindness. "Without you we'd 'a 'ad nobody; an' besides, you may lay to it I'd never 'a let you go a-meddlin' with my crew if Doctor Mentieth hadn't said you was competent to do it. Sakes alive! Look what a stump you gave Bill Maitland. Took 'is starboard leg hoff at the knee-joint, you did, scare a month agone, an' there 'e is skylarkin' about just as hactive as a nape. Ain't got a tail, o' course, by way o' an extry warp, but uses 'is teeth as good as one. No; you write me out a flamin' Ha-1 certificate for yerself at the end o' this cruise, an' Ike Gauntlett 'll clap a cross 'is mark, below to show hall and hevery that you're the best surgeon 'e'd ever want to ampitate, sear, or physic 'im."

At which eulogy Sandy Carmichael was constrained to blush through his copper-coloured skin, and O'Neill to ejaculate "Brayvo!" encouragingly.

Sneyd took up the tale. "I'm beginning to think you are right, Captain. My own wish to stay longer in these seas was a purely selfish one. The romance of the unknown waters, and the glimpses of a country that one had only learnt about from sailors' hearsay, fascinated me. But every argument points out that the fascination would probably be brought to an abrupt conclusion, were any endeavour made to spin it out further. To stay longer would be folly—foolhardiness—madness. José de Lato is not the man to forget the way we had him on the hip. The coast will bristle with his war-vessels. And we can't hope to play the *Santa Thérèsa* game again. If we sail now, we shall have a clear course. If we wait, we shall find a couple of hungry eagles standing on and off the entrance to Magellan's Straits, ready to pick us up whether we try that way or the Horn."

"And you, O'Neill?" asked Gauntlett.

"Let's cut an' run as hard as we can go, Capt'n. There's stuff on board worth takin' care of, an' once ashore at Bristhol, it's meself that sees a great piece of divarsion on ahead. An' then, when the money's well nigh spent, why we'll refit the schooner wid the balance, an' stand out here again an' grab some more. For mind yez, barrin' the heat, an' barrin' the unmannerliness o' thim dons in never lettin' yez paceably ashore to say so much as a good-morrer to the ladies, 'tis the foinest cruisin' ground a bhoy wid a taste for a scrimmage could wish for."

"Then," said Gauntlett, "that's decided; an' I'm glad of it. By our articles you'd all a voice in the matter, an' I was rayther feering that with yer taste whetted for the dollars, you'd never rest till ye tried for more, and then very like lost the lot."

So saying, he gave the requisite directions to the helmsman for change of course, and then leaving Sneyd, who was officer of the watch, on deck, the rest went below for supper.

The announcement, "Homeward bound!" was received with acclamation forward. To most of the foremast hands, the prize-money they would have to share seemed a very mine of wealth, and although the majority of them would run through the greatest part of it during a week's jaunt on shore—as was the time-honoured custom of that day—they were eager enough to begin spending.

Sailors earned their money like horses then, and spent it like asses.

The wind was very light, but steady and favourable, and, under every stitch of cloth she could show, the schooner reeled off a fair number of knots. She was not doing her best speed, it is true, for there were thousands of barnacles sticking to her bottom, and a whole forest of long ribbony weeds, some of them as much as twenty feet long, streaming along her sides. But this was neither the place nor the time to careen, and the retardation had to be put up with. Once on the eastern coast, they hoped to find a convenient river where she could be put to rights again for the long passage across the Atlantic.

But some of the little schooner's complement were not destined to see their native shores again yet awhile; and this is how it came about.

(*To be continued.*)

FRIEND: "Do thoughts that came to you long ago ever return?"

Scribbler: "Oh, yes—if I inclosed a stamped envelope."

JOHNNY and Mary were both riding the hobby-horse. Johnny felt his limitations, and presently observed: "Sister, if one of us would get off there would be more room for me."

SHE: "How is it that you sometimes show such masculine energy, and again such womanly indecision."

He: "Oh, I suppose it is a matter of inheritance. You see, half of my ancestors were men and half were women?"

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MY PATIENT'S GHOST.

THE duties of my calling as a professional nurse have taken me frequently, during the past ten years, into peculiar surroundings, and I have had many odd and not a few uncanny experiences in my ministrations.

It was about eight o'clock one evening in late December, 1872, that I received a summons to attend a gentleman who had been for some days suffering from an internal malady, and upon whom the attending surgeons had decided to operate that night. They had hoped to avoid this course, but, all other means of relief having been exhausted, and the patient slowly sinking, the last hope was an immediate operation.

Snow was falling gently in great feathery masses as I alighted from the train at the suburban station, and entering the carriage awaiting me, was driven rapidly and silently along the broad, smooth street toward the mansion occupied by the patient.

Mr. Boland was an eccentric bachelor, who lived all alone, save for a retinue of male servants, in the great house which loomed grim and imposing before me, as the carriage, passing under a huge stone archway, rolled up the broad drive and stood beneath the "*porte cochère*." The front door was opened by an austere looking person in sombre livery, who stood respectfully aside as I entered, while a footman, of equal soberness of dress and mien, approached, and taking my hat and coat, at once conducted me along the great hall to a small room. A cheerful open fire and smoking tea-kettle gave the apartment an air of homely comfort, and as I threw myself lazily into a big leather chair near the table, on which stood the tea-set, the silent and dignified servant poured some water into the tea-pot and silently took his leave.

I was soon restored to my normal condition of warmth through the magic influence of the tea, and sat pleasantly contemplating the fire, and wondering when I should be called to the business for which I had been summoned, when a footfall behind me caused me to turn my head, and I beheld, standing in the doorway, a third individual, who at once spoke; and though his tones sounded hollow and far away, I was thankful to hear even this distant semblance to the human voice in such a preternaturally silent house.

"I am instructed to inquire if Mr. Washburn is prepared to attend the bedside of Mr. Boland."

He stood like a statue carved from ebony, and as I inclined my head affirmatively, turned as if on a pivot and led the way along the hall and up the broad, gently rising staircase, at the top of which he threw open a door and bade me enter.

The bed-chamber into which I stepped was a large and lofty apartment lighted by two windows. A huge old-fashioned bed stood with its head against the north wall, while directly opposite was a fireplace, in which glowed a mass of coals, and above, a very fine Venetian mirror extending to the ceiling and occupying the whole of the chimneypiece. Between the windows in the east wall was a small, well-fitted book case, while a green-covered table on which stood a student lamp and a pile of periodicals, half-a-dozen easy chairs; a wash-stand and a small table containing a night-lamp and an assortment of medicine bottles, completed the furniture.

One of the four surgeons present informed me that the exigency of the case had demanded immediate action, and that they had been obliged to perform the operation about half-an-hour before my arrival, but that it had been so far successful, and that the subject's unusual vitality promised to carry him through safely. He was still under the influence of the anæsthetic, a condition which his stertorous breathing plainly indicated, and was resting quietly in the bed to which he had been transferred from the improvised operating table.

After some few minutes, the surgeons retired from the room, leaving me alone with the patient, but with instructions to call them upon his regaining consciousness. Seating myself near the bedside, I took the man's hand in my fingers and closely noted the action of the pulse. The great house might have been deserted by all save the sick man and myself, the only audible signs of habitation being his laboured breathing.

In the course of half an hour consciousness returned, and I at once pulled the bell-cord, thus summoning the physicians. Mr. Boland was soon made as comfortable as his condition admitted of, and bidding me good-night, three of the physicians took their leave, one, Dr. Morton, deciding to remain for the night, in order to assist me in any possible emergency. He soon retired from the room, going to a small apartment on the floor below, in which was a comfortable sofa where he could obtain a much-needed rest, and from where he could also be quickly summoned by a bell-cord communicating between that room and Mr. Boland's.

For some time I sat at the table, reading here and there from the magazines, interrupting myself only to administer medicine to the patient.

The house was as silent as the grave.

About midnight the snow had ceased falling, and the moon came out from her screen of clouds, lighting up the wintry scene in weird radiance. Not the faintest breath of air stirred the gaunt branches with their soft white covering. Standing by the window the picture was, to me, deeply impressive of Nature's poetic handiwork, and it moved me to a deep reverence for the great Mystery of Life.

As I silently and gravely contemplated the scene before me, a peculiar, fluttering sigh came to my ears, and I hurried to the bedside. The sick man was lying on his side, his face towards me, and as I looked into the expressionless eyes, my professional instincts, sharpened by the memory of many scenes, told me at once that the climax had been reached, and that the end was near.

Stepping quickly across the floor, I pulled the bell-cord sharply. Hurrying back, I administered a hypodermic injection and had replaced the syringe when Dr. Morton entered the room. He simply opened wide the now drooping eye-lid, and regarded the pupil, shook his head and sat down.

"There's nothing to be done; he will be dead in five minutes. I suppose you know the pain has entirely subsided?"

I replied in the affirmative, and took my stand at the foot of the bed, while, in the calm and solemn stillness

of that December midnight, the spirit of Christopher Boland took its flight.

After saying that he would leave word at the undertaker's to call at eight o'clock in the morning, Dr. Morton took his departure, and there being no reason why I should lose the remainder of the night's rest, I prepared to retire. No superstitious dread of a dead man had a part in my composition, and throwing off my coat and shoes, I drew the sheet over the entire body, and extinguishing the lamp—the moon shone brightly enough for any ordinary purpose—lay down on the bed, and drawing the blankets about me, was soon asleep by the side of the late Mr. Christopher Boland.

A feeling of restlessness followed a brief interval of disturbing dreams in which a pair of penetrating eyes were the predominant element, and I awoke with a start.

One can seldom gauge accurately the time passed in sleep, but, judging from the positions of the shadows cast upon the floor by the moon, I presumed the hour to be about three. My first glance was at the body beside which I lay. It was, of course, in the position in which it had been last placed, the sheet which alone covered it falling in at the eyes and again midway down the trunk, leaving two sharply defined prominences at the nose and feet, and provoking in my newly-awakened brain that uncanny sensation with which many are so disagreeably familiar.

At almost the same instant I detected the strong smell of tobacco smoke. Not being myself a user of the soothing narcotic in any form, and no one having smoked in the room since my arrival, I instantly cast my eyes about in search of the intruder, who, I thought, must have entered during my sleep.

The moon had passed beyond the edge of the roof, and its rays were less brilliant than when I had retired. As my searching glance reached the east wall, it met an object which caused me to spring from the bed and stan gazing in stupid horror!

The Thing, whatever, it was, was of human shape as far as erect stature is concerned; it was enveloped in white from head to foot no sign of flesh showing, save the face, and as it glided to and fro before the windows, a cigar, from which arose great blue-white clouds of smoke, was held between its teeth.

As it slowly turned, my blood grew cold and creepy, for, as I gazed, the face met mine, the eyes glowed like two phosphorescent globes as they looked straight at me and—the features were those of Christopher Boland!

The awful sight of the spirit of the man whom I thought lying dead beside me, pacing about the room smoking a cigar as in life, utterly unnerved me, and I stood, half crouching, by the bedside, my gaze riveted in horrified fascination upon it.

By a supreme effort of will, I reached towards the corpse, at the same time keeping my eyes upon the apparition, and quickly drew the sheet from the face. For an instant I looked at the features, calm in death, but that instant was enough to have driven many a man stark mad, for the last doubt as to my half-awakened senses, had fled—the body in the bed and the Thing were of feature identical.

Although my memory is perfectly, in fact painfully clear on the whole night's events, yet at that moment I think my mind must have wandered, for, without exactly knowing how I did it, I found myself stealthily approaching the Thing, as if to grasp it. I had almost reached it, when it turned, and those two fearful burning eyes seemed to pierce me and look onward into interminable space! And even as I paused, it slowly approached me, its frightful gaze throwing me into a condition of hypnotic helplessness; the fire from the burning cigar producing the effect of a third terrible eye.

I was between it and the bed; flight was impossible, but even had the way been clear before me, escape would have been equally hopeless, my legs shaking, my every nerve trembling, while I could not take my eyes from those others that seemed to pierce my very soul.

Straight towards me it came, neither looking to right nor left, but through and beyond me. I drew myself close to the wall; closer, closer, it came, the deathly pale features striking terror through and through me, the awful eyes burning into me. I could feel the grave-damp mist surrounding it, so near was it. Time was no more, a second and a year were alike to my stricken, palsied nerves; in a moment more, one single move, and the awful thing would be upon me. Heavens! It turned in its course, and with increasing speed, glided past the bed, and in an instant more a wreath of smoke came backwards over its head as it vanished through the open door.

With returning reason, I staggered towards the bell-cord to ring for help, but even as my shaking arm reached upward, the awful thing returned and rapidly approached me. A sudden and complete revulsion of feeling overcame me, and with the frenzy born of mortal terror, I rushed at the Presence and threw myself at its throat.

Instantly I found myself in the embrace of a pair of icy arms, for which my strength was no match, that tore my hands away and flung me violently against the table, upsetting it and throwing the lamp and books to the floor in crashing confusion. I was struggling to regain my feet from amidst the mass, when, with a wild, unearthly, echoing scream that rang throughout the house it turned and fled like a wraith from the room.

This move on the part of my recent antagonist lent me growing courage, and I rushed after it. Even in that moment, so vividly are trifles sometimes impressed upon one's sharpened wits, I recall seeing the still smoking cigar lying on the carpet where it had been dropped in the scuffle.

As I emerged from the room into the broad hall, a sound of a heavily falling body came from the bottom of the stairs, and I saw in the dim light cast by the swinging lamp above me, a white form lying on the landing below: at the same time there was the pattering rush of stockinged feet, and three forms threw themselves upon the recumbent figure, while I sprang down among them.

The three additions to the *melée* were the butler and two footmen, and in their arms they held the half fainting form of another man.

Explanations were at once in order. The fainting man was a somnambulistic servant, whose close physical resemblance to his master had been the cause of one or two previous complications; the effect of this similarity to the dead had been intensified by the uncertain reflection of the moon's rays from the snow. The glowing eyes were the result of my fevered imagination coupled with my concentration of gaze upon the lighted cigar, after having once seen those eyes glisten for an instant in the weird light of the room.

The violent awakening of the somnambulist proved nearly his death, though he finally recovered after a severe attack of brain fever, while my own premature white hair attests the awful agony of those few brief but frightful moments with the smoking ghost.

ELMAR END.

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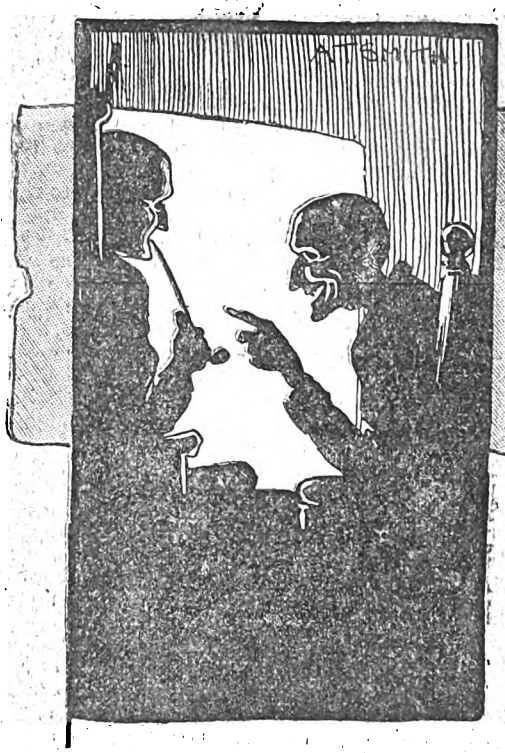


A Peruvian Millionaire.

JABEZ HEATH THORNTON was his full name. He was called Jay by his cronies, Thornton Heath by wags, and Mr. Thornton by the various dukes, baronets and knights who were able to squeeze gold out of the "Peruvian Millionaire."

His face was almost saintly in aspect, owing to a peculiar benevolent smile which continually hovered round his mouth. In figure he was tall, rotund, and possessing that characteristic popularly supposed to belong to members of British corporations.

Jabez H. Thornton had done every thing as became a millionaire. He owned race horses which always came in last when he backed them, or romped home when he laid heavy odds against them. He owned a paper, universally run down, which was known under the sobriquet of *Intellect* but which was in reality an outrage on that gift; therefore, when a facetious "comp" slipped in "Rats" beneath the title, the world echoed the sentiment and *Intellect* expired.

He had presented a drinking-fountain to Camden Town, an obelisk to the inhabitants of Cobham-in-the-Marsh, and three hospitals and a deaf and dumb asylum owed their existence to him.

Having done everything that was expected of him, Jabez proposed and was accepted. Perhaps his millions influenced the lady of his choice, or perchance, being above such sordid considerations, she had been attracted by Jabez's beautiful expression.

This was the tale she cooed to Jabez, and Jabez credited the statement.

So overjoyed was he by the avowal, that he straightway gave orders for a grand ball to be given in honour of the engagement, and in his lordly style proceeded to make the fortunes of some dozen tradesmen.

Royalty was invited and accepted the invitations. France, Italy, Russia and Peru were represented, and Thornton, overjoyed at the way he had managed to wriggle into society, was everywhere greeting his guests with effusion—the male portion—and welcoming the ladies with complimentary glances, well-chosen phrases, and with as much bowing and grace as his somewhat rotund person would allow.

"I must compliment you, señor, on the magnificent entertainment you have provided for our amusement," exclaimed Don Pervibelli del Igo Juera, shaking his host cordially by the hand.

"Yes, it's fairish," replied Thornton, beaming, as he mopped his forehead. "I'm glad you like it; the electric lights in those orchids are my own idea."

"Charming, my dear sir," answered Don Pervibelli, toying carelessly with the cross of St. James, his sole decoration. "Truly charming, *à propos* I must congratulate you on your engagement with the *bella senortta* Violet McKay."

Again Thornton beamed, twirled his fingers nervously, and finding nothing appropriate to say, mopped his face vigorously.

"I have taken the liberty, *amigo mio*, to bring a Peruvian friend with me, to see the magnificence of your ball. May I trust I stand forgiven?"

The well-turned compliment sank into the credulous heart of the millionaire, who replied with a sudden burst of generosity:

"Señor, treat my house as if it were your own. I am only too glad to welcome any friend of yours."

Don Pervibelli smiled an unfathomable smile, which, had Thornton been able to read it, would have made him regret his last sentence.

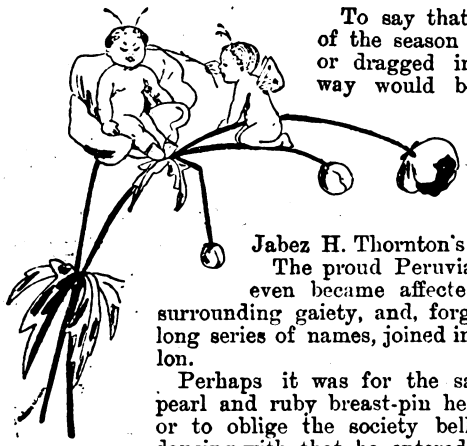
"The señor Americano is too good."

"Shucks; that is bosh!" retorted Thornton giving the attaché a familiar pat on the shoulder. "And where is your friend?"

"Ah, señor," replied Pervibelli, deprecatingly. "*Mi amigo*, as he entered, saw a lady—you comprehend?" he elevated his shoulders and spread out his hands, palms outwards. "*Mi amigo* is what you call a sad flirt."

Thornton laughed gaily, then advanced to greet more guests with his sister, and failed to note the peculiar glimmer of malice which lurked in Pervibelli's eyes for a moment or so.

"I wonder what Svenela would say to be called a flirt? Well, perhaps he is, *when he has other things on hand!*" muttered the Peruvian attaché sombrely.



To say that *the* affair of the season hung fire, or dragged in any one way would be a gross calumny! Never had anything started with the swing of Jabez H. Thornton's ball.

The proud Peruvian attaché even became affected by the surrounding gaiety, and, forgetting his long series of names, joined in the cotillon.

Perhaps it was for the sake of the pearl and ruby breast-pin he obtained, or to oblige the society belle he was dancing with, that he entered the cotillon; be it as it may, the Señor Don Pervibelli del Igo Juera so far forgot his dignity as to dance.

He smiled peculiarly the whole evening, and when he took his partner to supper the smile became more pronounced.

As was expected, the supper proved a feast that would not have disgraced the Board of Crœsus, and the good things commenced to vanish in the customary way amid a buzz of conversation, till Jabez H. Thornton rose, and, holding a silver goblet of champagne in his hand, exclaimed:

"I believe that at every gathering the health of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, should be proposed, therefore I do the same."

The toast was drunk; then Thornton exclaimed:

"It is a great pleasure to me to welcome my friends round my humble board to-night! And I am about to ratify a promise I made to several of you, as to the mode in which I made my pile, to-night—It has been my very proud boast that when I set foot in Peru, I had not what you Britishers call a "stiver" in my pockets.

"I hadn't enough to buy a dinner, let alone pay my fare to Lima! I remember at the time I anathematised my luck, but now I have every reason to bless the providence, which ordained that I should *tramp* to the capital of Peru!"

He paused, and glanced amusedly round at the expectant faces bent on his, then continued:

"I had gone, by accident, some twenty miles out of course on the Cordilleras; and being thoroughly worn out, I flung myself on the rocky ground. I slipped, and to save myself from falling down a somewhat steep declivity, clutched at a small rock. The jerk wrenched it out of the parent earth. It was at its base that I discovered my first aid to wealth—It was there I found "The Eye of Peru Ruby," I bought the land with the money obtained by the sale of the stone, and became what I am!"

"The señor is to be congratulated on the way he made his fortune, and also for the manner in which he relates the story of his road to wealth," remarked a quiet voice from the end of the table.

Thornton glanced in the direction whence the voice came, and noticed a face which was strangely familiar to him.

Jabez started guiltily.

"I also know a story of how an American señor made his fortune near Lima. With the permission of the *hidalgos* and *señoritas* present, I will relate the tale."

"Come, come, señor!" cried Jabez H. Thornton, turning oddly pale, "this is not a time for anecdotes! We shall doubtless be very pleased to hear your tale of the way in which the American made his pile—on another occasion."

"As the señor desires!" replied the other, rising and bowing courteously. "For another time let it be! I can assure you it is very interesting!"

"No, let us have it now!" cried Violet McKay impulsively, a sentiment which was generally echoed.

"I bow to your wishes," replied the guest, deprecatingly. "If I go wrong I trust to the Señor Thornton to put me right. I forget places after I have left them," he added apologetically.

"I fail to see how I can put you right over detail, if I don't know the place you mention," replied Thornton irritably.

"Still I think the señor will know the place I mention," replied the other in an odd voice.

Thornton shivered at the sinister intonation; he had a presentiment that some evil was about to befall him.

"If that is the case," replied Thornton, with a bad attempt at ease of manner, "rely on me to help you."

The Peruvian bowed, then said:

"About twenty miles from Lima, in the direction of Paseo, there is a deep ravine, It is called the *Cañon del Demonicos*. It is a wild and erie spot, the home of the vulture, condor and frigate bird. Its high scarped rocks tower heavenwards, to be tipped with everlasting snows. The solitude which reigns in this gloomy cañon is awesome, but when a storm rages nowhere could there be more tumult! Am I not correct, señor?"

Jabez H. Thornton bowed.

"I was positive the señor would aid me with his recollection," said the Peruvian blandly.

Thornton started, then pouring himself out a glass of champagne with trembling hand, exclaimed:

"I have seen the place you mention, that is all."

"I imagined so," replied the Peruvian drily. "Along the side of this ravine runs a twisted path—let me see, it leads to a cavern, an ancient fane of the fireworshippers, does it not, señor?"

"How should I know?" retorted Jabez angrily.

"I apologise! Well about seven years ago, within this cavern dwelt a priest and his daughter Thaide. She was very beautiful—very beautiful," he added abstractedly. "She was also young—some eighteen years of age. Had she not been so youthful," continued the Peruvian reflectively, "she would not have committed the error she did, an error which debarred her from entering the world to come."

He paused to glance at Thornton, who, ashy pale, was regarding him with a terror-struck stare.

"Thaide was credulous, and thus became a willing dupe of an *American hidalgo* whom ill luck brought one day down the ravine path, leading to the ancient temple of Fire, and caused the priest to anathematise his daughter, the man, and the day he was born.

"Thaide was at the cavern mouth when the *Americano* passed along. He saw her, and spoke. Days flew by, the stranger was always near to whisper his poison in the priest's daughter's ear, and she—believed and loved the American *hidalgo*."

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Once more he paused to glance at Thornton. His ghastly pallor had increased. He was gulping down raw brandy.

"The *hidalgo* wooed and won her heart; to him she communicated the mystery of her faith, the place where the 'Eye of Fire' lay hidden, and showed him the temple's treasure. The greed of the man was awakened, the scoundrel proposed that they should elope and take the Fire treasure with them."

"Well?" hissed Thornton. "Well?"

"Thaide at first demurred, the scoundrel urged his love, and she, unhappy maiden, agreed. In the dead of night the guilty pair stole into the inner temple and wrenched the 'Eye of Fire' from its fastenings, abstracting the sacred jewels from their cases and vessels of worship. Then came a tragedy to add to the horrors of the night."

Pallid to the very lips, the millionaire poured himself out a glass of port, which he raised to his lips with palsied hand.

"Blinded by the lust of gold, the *American hidalgo* dresolve that there should not be two to share the ill-gotten wealth. In the outer cave, on the plea of not allowing her to carry any weight, he transferred the booty to his own person, and, as with loving hand she placed the last jewel in the bag he carried, he shot her twice in the breast and fled!

"The reports brought the priest on the scene, only in time to catch her last breath. With voice full of anguish he reviled his child, as dictated by his religion; then pressing his lips to the blood-stained face of his child, prayed as only a broken heart can pray, for the revoking of the awful malediction. Then, rising, he swore to avenge the child he loved better than life!"

"And the American," gasped the millionaire, "what became of him?

"All in good time, señor," replied the Peruvian, in even tones. "He first went to New York City, then came to London——"

"London? London?" gasped Thornton, his eyes nearly starting from their sockets.

"*Si*—London, why not?" replied the Peruvian, his eyes gleaming strangely. "For six years the priest has waited in vain for an opportunity to strike the murderer of his child, when it would hurt him most. Shall we wish him success in his hopes, Señor?"

"Yes—er—by all means!" faltered the millionaire.

"Even when I say the *American hidalgo's* name is *Jabez Heath Thornton?*" cried the Peruvian mercilessly.

Thornton became livid. By a violent display of will, he collected himself and leaping to his feet, shouted hoarsely, as he flung his glass down on the table:

"You lie!"

The Peruvian flushed, his eye danced with fire as he almost hissed:

"Murderer and thief, do you dare call the Fire priest Svenela a liar?"

"Svenela?" shrieked the millionaire, panic-struck. "Oh, Heavens! I recognise your face! Help me, friends, he'll murder me!—Help! Help——"

Three shots fired in rapid succession across the table, silenced the shrieks of the guilty man, then the Peruvian, throwing down his smoking revolver, cried:

"I know the law of England relative to killing your fellow man. Call an officer. I surrender."

The next day the newspaper boys made a lot of money with special editions.

TRISTRAM K. MONCK.

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All applications for No. 16 distribution must reach us by January 23rd, addressed to The 16th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of 13th Sovereign Distribution.

Sovereigns have been sent to:

W. E. Keyte, 7 Promenade, South Street, Rochdale, C. Grey, 16 Chapel Street, Gosport, Hants,

both having applied for them under the conditions of the Distribution Scheme.

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W. Doig, 7 Roxburgh Street, Galashiels; Thos. Abel, 3 Blackfriars Street, Here ord; John Cottam, Caxton House, Oswestry; Geo. Bell, Castle Street, Dornoch, N.B.; Mrs. Edwards, 159 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.; H. Hammond, 158 Euston Road, N.W.; J. S. Harrisson, 8 Foster Lane, E.C.; Chas. Field, 16 Unicorn Hill, Redditch; J. Groves, 9 Belle Vue Crescent, Cockington, Devon; Thos. Bickford, Atlantic Hotel, Hugh Street, St. Mary's, Scilly Isles; W. James, Market Street, Penryn, Cornwall; R. Kirkham, 5 Hyde Lane, Hyde, Cheshire; W. Pasher, Brook End, Catworth, Hunts; John Letts, Irchester, Northants; W. McCague, Lynn Road, Ely; H. Newson, Market Square, Fakenham; J. C. Taylor, Hall Farm, Drinkstone, Bury St. Edmunds; Jas. O'Flanagan, Nesham Place, Houghton-le-Spring; Miss Pringle, 3 Clive Terrace. Alnwick; Jos. Savage, Townhead, Ousby, Cumberland; J. W. Rowlandson, Kiln Head, Lambrigg, Grayrigg, Westmoreland; F. Uden, 9 Grace Hill, Folkestone; Chas. Voase, 121 Freeman Street, Great Grimsby; W. West, 135 Wincolmlee, Hull; ohn, Wright, King Street, Alfreton; C. Yorke, Weston Lodge, Lenton Road, Nottingham; Geo. Abbott, 1 West Street, Leicester; J. W. Ball, Post Office, Edith Weston, Rutland; W. H. Cox, Sunnyside, Peckridge, Staffs; E. Buchanan, 36 Mitchell Street, Clonmel; Jas. Donald, Irish Quarter West, Carrickfergus; G. E. Eagle, Medler Cottage, Shrivenham, Berks; W. Fleet, 78 High Street, Newport Pagnell; Mrs. Gardner, London Road, Chipping Norton; B. Hall, Greenfield Road, Scarborough; R. Jenkins, 5 Charles Street, Milford Haven; Mrs. Kingston, St. Ewins Bridge Street, Chepstow; W. Leach, Ivy Lodge, Martock; Chas. Morse, High Street, Lydney; Geo. Nicholls, 13 Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol; E. Otto, 4 Highgate Hill, N.; G. J. Thomson, 385 Romford Road, Forest Gate, E.; W. Reeves, 280 Dalston Lane, Hackney, N.E.; W. Brown, 33 Bay View Terrace, Penzance; C. Crosskill, 7 Oxford, Street, Wellingborough; Mrs. Kirk, 494 Glossop Road, Sheffield; J. Young, 24 Marshall Place, Perth; R. J. Ussher, J.P., Cappogh, Lismore, R.S.O., Co. Waterford.

AN HONOURABLE DESERTER.

In the course of my wanderings I have met a good many men who fought in the American Civil War, some on one side and some on the other; but I have only met one who fought on both sides, and it is his story that I am going to tell here as nearly as I can as it was told to me by one of the chief actors in the tragedy during a run from New York to the Bermudas on one of the summer boats.

He was what the Autocrat at the Breakfast Table has aptly described as a "pitch-pine Yankee," a tall, lank, loose-jointed, leather-skinned New Englander, strong as a horse, gentle as a woman, and in worldly matters practical down to the soles of his broad, flat boots.

It was a remark of mine about the difficulty that a good many men must have had in choosing sides when the shot from Fort Sumpter roused the continent to war that drew the story from him, and this is how he began:

"I never wanted to go into the war at all for my own part, and I don't think I ever should have done if it hadn't been for Arthur Wolstan's old man being clean jumping mad on abolitionism, and fairly driving him into the battle-field. Arthur and I had been chums ever since our first fight, and that took place pretty soon after we could stand. I came out top, and two or three days afterwards I licked a bigger boy who was putting upon him, and then we swore everlasting friendship, and friends we remained to the end.

"Arthur's father was a big man in our little New Hampshire town, a good deal bigger than mine, who was only a small farmer and store-keeper, but for all that we got to Harvard together from school, and there we became greater chums than ever, probably because our wider look at the world showed us the need of friendship in such a wilderness.

"Next to myself Arthur's greatest friend at Harvard was a man of about his own age, named Stanton Mouatt, a strong Southerner, and the cousin of the prettiest girl I have ever set eyes on. This man in the course of a few months got a very great influence over Arthur, but I never could cotton to him, and there was very little love lost between us.

"Mouatt was very much in love with his pretty cousin, but there was no formal engagement between them, and when Arthur met her one Thanksgiving time, he fell in love with her too, and, like the man that he was, told Mouatt so, and they arranged it between them that the one who could get her should have her, and the other one should be best man at the wedding to show that there was no ill-feeling.

"When the war broke out, Stanton Mouatt went South as a matter of course, and got a commission in a South Carolina regiment. Arthur and I didn't want to go blowing holes in our fellow creatures at all. We had gone into the question more from the student's point of view, and we knew how much commercial trickery and political wire-pulling there was beneath the big talk of the Northern men, and if anything our sympathy was with the Southerners; but, as I have said, old Wolstan was a hopeless crank on the subject of anti-slavery, and after a few pretty wild scenes between them he told Arthur, in a blazing rage, that he was either a Secessionist or a coward, and that anyhow he could choose between putting on the Federal uniform or being disowned and disinherited right away.

"If it hadn't been for his mother and sisters I believe the lad would have gone south there and then, for he was a high-spirited and sensitive young chap, and the slight on his character made him madder than I had ever seen him before. Then, too, there were Lilian Mouatt's pretty brown eyes looking at him out of Carolina, and he knew how they would welcome him when they saw him in the grey and silver.

"However, his women-folks over-persuaded him, and the end of it was that he allowed himself to be commissioned to the New Hampshire Regiment, and I went into the ranks, not because I cared a shuck about North or South, but because I wanted to follow the only friend I ever had in the world. You will see from this that neither of us had any very great heart in the game when we started at it.

"We got to work, smelt powder and blood, and after a bit got the savage in us roused enough to like them both. I was in Arthur's company, and though we had been through Bull Run and many another sharp tussle together, neither of us had got more than a few scratches to show for it. This good luck lasted down to the fall of '61, when the 5th New Hampshire were doing outpost duty down in East Kentucky, in rather a lonesome bit of country.

"I suppose you know that when the two armies were not actually at hammer and tongs, the pickets on both sides often hailed each other and had a friendly chat for a bit, and plenty of times I have known old friends meet in this way and talk over old times a few hours before they would be doing their level best to blow each other's brains out, or ride each other down in a cavalry charge.

"It was in this way that Arthur Wolstan and Stanton Mouatt met about twelve months after they had parted at Harvard. They recognised each other at once, and rode up and shook hands as cordially as though neither of them considered it his patriotic duty to shoot the other on sight the next time they met in battle. If you wanted to see the pure foolishness of war, just after one of the outpost meetings was the time to think the subject over.

"Well, Arthur and Mouatt had a long chat quite apart from the rest of us, and as we parted at last to go on our respective rounds they shook hands again, and as Arthur turned his horse he said:

"'So long, old man. See you again, I hope—when the war is over.'

"It was a foolish thing to talk apart to the Confederate at all, and still more foolish to shout such a

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farewell as that and only mutter the last few words. Arthur had more than one enemy in the troop, and through a sergeant that he had once reported and had severely punished, a mixed-up, exaggerated report of what he had said and done got to the ears of the major, who was the best hated man in the regiment, and well deserved to be so, for he was as big a brute as ever wore a uniform.

"If he had really thought there was anything in what Arthur had said or done to give reason for suspicion, it was his place to have made a formal inquiry in the proper way, but instead of doing that he gossiped about it to the other officers, and at last openly insulted Arthur before his own comrades, by sneering out his opinion that it wouldn't cost the other side much to buy over Lieutenant Wolstan's valuable services and all the information he could remember.

"I never knew what Arthur had done to make this man hate him enough to do such a scandalous thing as this, but anyhow it was too much for hot blood like his, and the next day Major Beale received a challenge with an intimation that if it was not accepted he would be publicly kicked on the first favourable opportunity. Of course duelling on active service is punished with death if it is found out, but for all that it is done on extreme occasions like this. The Major, however, acted up to his character and sent the challenge to the Colonel, and the result was that poor Arthur was court-martialled, degraded to the ranks, and sentenced to six months' fortress duty.

"The night before he was to be removed a sharp attack was made on our position, and in the confusion I managed to knock over the sentry on guard at his hut and to get him out. That doesn't sound right to you, I suppose, but my friend was a lot more to me than North and South rolled up together, and I thought that he had been badly enough treated for someone to get hurt for it. I may mention just here that Major Beale did not survive the next battle.

"The Confederates drove our out-posts in after about three hours' hard fighting, and then drew off, as it was the object of the attack only to feel our pulse prior to a big battle that everyone felt would have to come off before very long. The treatment that Arthur had received had changed him from a lukewarm supporter of the North into a mad, unreasoning enemy, and as soon as the scurry of the attack was over he and I got out of the ditch where we were hiding and walked openly into the Confederate lines. The sentry challenged us, and half an hour later Arthur was in Captain Mouatt's tent discussing ways and means, and I was looking for a grey uniform to fit me.

"Desertion? Ye-es, I suppose it was, though at the time we called it changing sides, and we saved our consciences a bit by obstinately refusing to give the slightest information that could be of any use to the Southerners. It was this refusal that brought Stanton Mouatt out in his true colours, and led to a row that ended in two funerals, and very nearly in three.

"It was about a week after we went over. A biggish battle had been fought, and we had got the worst of it. The night after the fight Mouatt took Arthur away down a little valley with a stream in it called Maddox Run, to pump him about the strength of a position on which a night attack was to be made. I never had much faith in Arthur's Southern chum, and so when I saw them going off towards the glen I took it into my head to follow them at a respectful distance so as to be handy in case anything unpleasant happened. When they stopped in a sheltered little nook, I crept up close enough to hear them talk.

"Things went just as I thought they would. Mouatt did all he knew to persuade Arthur to give him the information. At last when all persuasion had failed, he lost his temper and tried threats. Then I heard Arthur say, as if to stop the discussion.

"'I would rather give myself up to the Federals and be shot for what I am—what your evil counsel and my own mad temper have made me—than be guilty of such treachery as that, so you can spare your breath. As for your threats I will only say that if you push the matter any further I shall take it as a personal insult and act accordingly.'

"I saw Mouatt's pale face flush a dusky red and his lips curl under his dark moustache, as he sneered out his answer:

"'My only objection to your going back to the Johnnies would be the fear that you might give them what you won't give us. There's not much use in a deserter, anyhow, if you can't get information out of him.'

"The words were hardly out of his mouth when Arthur's fist flew straight out from his shoulder, and sent Mouatt down like a felled ox with his mouth half full of blood and teeth. As soon as he realised what had happened he put his handkerchief to his mouth with one hand, and with the other he drew a revolver, and was just drawing a bead on Arthur when I jumped out on him, and got the bullet through the roots of my hair trying to screw the pistol out of his hand.

It was only a flesh wound, for the bullet grazed my skull without breaking anything, but it knocked the senses out of me for two or three hours, and when I came to myself it was moonlight, and clear enough for me to see the body of my old chum lying on its back within ten paces of me.

"I struggled to my feet, and went to him. There was a bullet hole just over his heart, and his pockets had been completely rifled. It was as foul a murder as had ever been committed, and as I dug the best grave I could for him with my cavalry cutlass, I swore that his murderer should pay the penalty for it as suddenly as I could make him. I saw through the whole plan now. Mouatt had tempted him to desert, and tried to disgrace him for good and all by making him a spy into the bargain, so that the question who should marry his cousin might be settled in his own favour right away. Failing in this he had provoked the quarrel and shot him in his tracks like a dog.

"That let me out on regular soldiering, and when my scalp was healed up I joined a troop of Confederate scouts and raided around impartially until my chance came."

"Then," said I, "I presume that Captain Mouatt did not marry his cousin after all?"

"No, sir, he didn't live long enough. He survived the chances of war a lot better than he deserved to do, but just before Lee got himself shut up in Richmond. Mouatt took his troop out foraging in the same district that our irregulars were working. I got the drop on him over my horse's back at long range, and did what the hangman couldn't have done under the circumstances. After the war was over I hunted up the pretty cousin and told her the whole story. She agreed with me that justice had been done, but she couldn't bring herself to marry me, though I tried very hard to persuade her. I believe she liked me, but she couldn't get over the shooting. Some women object to it, and she was one of them."

T. MASON.

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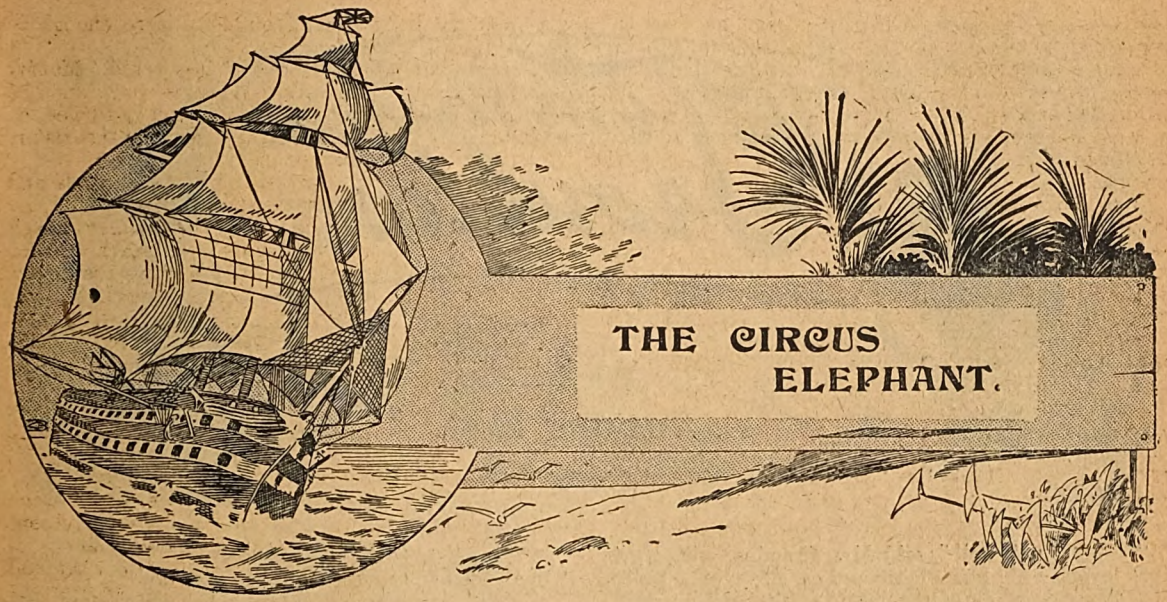

THE CIRCUS ELEPHANT.

THE small town of Little Peddlington had for some time been liberally placarded with announcements that a circus was coming, and that a grand street parade would be given on its entrance. When the event so long foreshadowed and anticipated came to pass, all the inhabitants, as a matter of course, turned out to witness it, and the procession duly took place. It was not as imposing a pageant as Sanger's; still, it was considered a very gorgeous affair in Little Peddlington.

There were live lions in cages, but they were old and feeble monarchs of the forest, and allowed the little boys to poke them through the bars with impunity. Still, they were real lions—or had been before they became so reduced in spirits and circumstances as to be compelled to take to the show business—and that was something.

The lions might have passed muster in little Peddlington, but the "magnificent trained elephant, purchased at enormous expense from his Imperial Highness the Maharajah of Seringapatam," was a dead failure. This was a sad blow to the inhabitants of Little Peddlington, for they had looked forward to the elephant as the chief attraction of the circus parade. What made their disappointment all the more severe was the fact that at starting the "magnificent trained elephant" was the greatest success in the procession.

Punctually at the hour advertised the elephant led off the parade, and the delighted spectators applauded enthusiastically.

True, the elephant was rather smaller than the public had been led to believe, but what it lacked in size it evidently made up for in intelligence, for as it bounded along majestically leading the procession, it waved its trunk gracefully and bowed to the spectators, first on the right hand and then on the left.

"How wonderfully trained!" exclaimed some.

"Could almost believe that it was gifted with reason just like a human being!" cried others; and there was no doubt that the late property of the Maharajah of Seringapatam was installed first favourite in the public opinion of Little Peddlington.

Unfortunately, however, a slight incident now occurred which speedily deprived it of its pride of place in popular favour, and tended seriously to lower Little Peddlington's opinion of elephants in general, and the Maharajah of Seringapatam's in particular.

It appears that one of the mischievous urchins of the town, who formed one of the great crowd that walked beside the centre of attraction, took it into his head to prick one of the hind legs of the elephant, whereupon the animal directed a vicious kick at his tormentor.

This in itself would not have surprised the beholders, but it did surprise them to hear a particularly distinct human voice from the animal's interior, crying:

"Now, then, drop it, will yer?"

Slowly it began to dawn upon the spectators that there was more in the elephant purchased from the Maharajah of Seringapatam than met the eye, and they urged on the little local arab to repeat the pricking process, which he did with increased vigour.

"Great Christopher!" shouted the voice from within, "I ain't going to stand this for no blessed circus show in creation!"

Up went the rear of the elephant in the air, and the hind-legs, carrying on them the head and body of an overgrown boy, squaring up in fighting attitude, hurled defiance at the crowd.

"I knows as I've come down to be the hind-legs of a helephant, but I won't be insulted by any idiot in this town, anyhow."

The front legs of the elephant were meanwhile struggling gamely on, but the elephant's centre of gravity had not been regulated for it to go as a biped. The result was that after a few ineffectual struggles the hind portion settled down like a ship at sea, and the front legs went up in the air, while a piteous voice screamed:

"Let me outer this, or I'll be choked!"

The people pulled the front legs out of the animal, and thus saved another human being from an untimely end. The circus proprietor rode up in a fearful state of mind, and commenced lashing the elephant's front and hind legs with his whip, but the damage was done. The show was a dead failure, and the residents of Little Peddlington lost their faith in elephants for evermore.

G. A. P.

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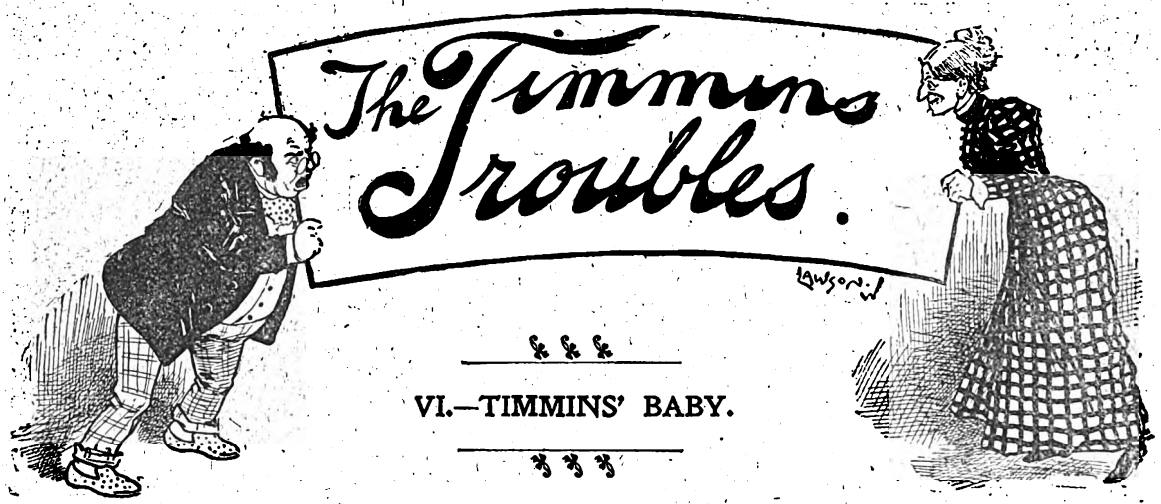

VI.—TIMMINS' BABY.

"Well, well, well," said Mr. Timmins, with a grin that involved his whole head, and an effort at a tip-toe that shook the whole house. "And so it's a girl, my dear."

Mrs. Timmins smiled faintly, and Mr. Timmins picked up his heiress.

"It's the image of you," she said, regarding with some trepidation Mr. Timmins' method of handling the infant.

"I don't see how you can make that out," said Mr. Timmins gravely. "I don't know when my nose looked like a dab of putty. Do I understand you that my eyes bear any resemblance to the head of a screw?"

"I mean the general features," murmured Mrs. Timmins.

"The general features seem to be all mouth," retorted Mr. Timmins, examining his acquisition. "If our general features are all alike, my visage must remind you of an earthquake. Hi! kichee! kichee! What makes her fold up her legs like that?"

"She can't help it," reasoned Mrs. Timmins. "They'll straighten out in time."

"No time like the present," quoted Mr. Timmins; and he took his daughter's feet and commenced pulling her limbs. "I don't want any bandy-legged first in this family, while I'm at the head of it."

Naturally the baby began to cry, and Mr. Timmins essayed to soothe it.

"Hi! kichee! kichee! kich-ee-ee!" he chirruped. "Great Scott, what a cavern! Have you any idea how much this mouth weighs? Hi! kichee! kichee-e! You'll have to get that mouth roofed in before next winter. What's the matter with her?"

"Perhaps you hurt her. Let me take her, please," pleaded Mrs. Timmins.

"She's doing well enough. Hi, you! Hold up. Haven't you anything to catch this mouth in? It's spilling all over the neighbourhood. Hi! Topsy, Genevieve, Cleopatra! I'm going to have trouble breaking this young one's temper, I can see that. Here bend the other way at once!" and Mr. Timmins tried to straighten up his offspring without avail.

"Let her come to me, do, please," moaned Mrs. Timmins, and Mr. Timmins was forced to hand her over.

"Well, that's a fine baby," said he, nursing his knee and eyeing the infant. "What're those bumps over its eyes for? What preponderance of intelligence do they represent?"

"You mustn't talk so," remonstrated Mrs. Timmins. "She's the handsomest child you ever saw."

"Well, she's got to stop biting her nails before she's much older. Here, take your hands out of your mouth, can't you? Why don't she put her hands down?"

"Why, all babies do that," explained Mrs. Timmins. "You can't stop that."

"I'm going to try," said Mr. Timmins, "and I don't want to be interfered with in bringing this child up. Here, put your hands in your pockets! Don't you let me see any more nail biting, or you and I'll have an argument. She gets that from your family, Mrs. Timmins."

"I say, dear, don't you want to go and order some things?" asked Mrs. Timmins.

"No," rejoined her husband; "I want to see this youngster. Where's her chin? Do babies always have their upper jaw set right on their shoulders? Kichee, kichee! I don't believe she's quite right. Where's her forehead? Great Moses! Her head is all on the back part! That baby's got to be pressed. It's got no shape."

"Get away," exclaimed Mrs. Timmins indignantly. "She's a perfect angel. There's nothing in the world the matter with her."

"Of course you know," growled Mr. Timmins. "You don't want anything more than a hundred yards of grey holland, and an exceeded income to be an orphan asylum. If I had your faith and the measles, I'd make a living as a foundling's home! She'll be old enough to spank in a week, won't she?"

"No, she won't," said Mrs. Timmins. "She'll never be old enough for that."

"She will," grunted Mr. Timmins; "if she isn't, she'll get it before she matures up to that period. That's all. Let me take her. Here, let's have her."

But Mrs. Timmins flatly refused.

"Keep your baby, then!" roared Mr. Timmins. "If you know more about babies than I do, then keep her. The way you coddle her one would think she was a new paste for the complexion. Fit you up with a broken sofa and a grease spot, and you'd do for a nursery."

And Mr. Timmins started off to find his friend Speckwick, who congratulated him, and started off with him to assist him in the selection of some things for the household.

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THE DOCTOR'S DOG.

DR. PETER LAURVIG was a native of Norway resident in Naples, where he was well known. He had taken his degrees for the simple love of science, and he practised medicine as an amateur among the poor, without fees, for the love of humanity, it seemed. But for those who penetrated more deeply into his idiosyncrasies, this opinion was difficult to reconcile with the thorough misanthropy of the man.

Dr. Laurvig was rich, a widower, and the father of a daughter whom he adored. He had left his own country in order to warm up the blood of this sickly child in the sunshine of Italy. The consumptive girl, however, had surrendered to her disease, and died in Naples. Her father remained in the place where the world was emptied for him of every joy.

After a period of overwhelming dejection, he resumed his old studies and began again his researches as an herbalist. Every day he wandered in the country or on the beach; bent with passion over the wild flowers, and the weeds floating in the sea-wrack.

A man who picked up simples must know how to cure. The superstition of the humble folk never varies as to the solidity of this deduction. The poor of the Vomero on the slope of which he lived, besieged the foreigner who came among them, in order to obtain consultations or remedies, and wearied with importunity, he yielded to their clamour. Soon he even sought occasions to apply his medical knowledge.

When his good deeds were lauded Laurvig shrugged his shoulders with an incredulous smile. He had examined himself; he knew what stimulus stirred him in that struggle against death. Then he tasted the pleasure of a revenge—the intoxication of the duellist who fights his adversary with the very weapons by which he has himself been conquered. Each victory thrown back on the spoiler had the savour of a personal avenging.

A large Danish dog, a fine animal, answering to the name Rampollo, constituted the habitual society of Doctor Peter. The man with the closed heart had intimate companionship only with this creature; his bitter sorrow sometimes solaced itself in the unfathomed tenderness of those great black eyes, and smiles responded to their mute prayer; then those shining pupils sought humbly for a sign of affection on the face of the master, and the dog received a caressing pat.

Rampollo followed Laurvig in his visits to his patients, carrying on his neck the basket containing the medicines gathered in the fields by the herbalist. From Capodimonte to the wharves, all the *lazzaroni* knew the inseparable couple. When the black dog appeared, the physician's humble *clientèle*—cripples and fever-stricken alike—struggled to the windows to hail without ceremony "the good doctor."

Laurvig had led for several years this kind of life when, in 1884, the cholera broke out in Naples. The awful scourge had hardly declared its presence before it was raging in the pestilential older quarters of the city, that network of dark malodorous alleys, lined with the damp stalls of fishmongers and fish-friers, deprived of air and light by the high leprous houses fronting on the pavement, with dingy tatters hanging from every window.

They live in the street, in Naples; they may die there also. From the early morning these gloomy dwellings empty themselves of their unwashed occupants; this human swarm seems to push forward to meet such sinister visitors, and to await their poisonous breath on the sills of their own doors.

The natural and general depression had the effect of an excitant upon Doctor Peter. The robber that had crushed his heart, the enemy whom he followed from habit into its hidden ambuscades—Death—now offered him open battle. He could strike the monster at once with redoubled blows. He gloried in the conflict, and counted proudly the prey that he would snatch from the grim destroyer.

Laurvig scarcely seemed to rest. Unfailing energy arose from his hatred and bitterness against the all-powerful slayer, to whom his imagination sometimes lent a form—a chimerical reality—so much he wished to hold its throat in his grasp. Every morning the dawn found him at work in those miserable quarters, amid that plague-stricken population which implored his aid. He regained his lodgings only after a long day's fight in the streets against the terrible scourge.

One evening as he took the road to the Vomero, a man stood before him at the entrance of the Calata San Sebastiano—one of those narrow alleys bordered by decaying old buildings, where the worst classes lodge and sleep.

"Doctor, for the love of Heaven, come up to my rooms. A girl is dying there," pleaded the man.

Laurvig was very tired; the day had been a hard one, and he had fasted since the morning. His body demanded rest. The medicine basket shook about, absolutely

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empty, on Rampollo's neck. The doctor tried to pass on.

Resolutely the man barred his way. He appeared to be mad with his trouble; there was no affectation, as the gas-jet which shone upon him revealed. He was clad in tatters, with a sailor's red cap on his head, and feverishly turned a bony face toward Laurvig—a face browned by the sun, and shaded by a black beard. A glance of fright seemed to revolutionize its expression—the glance of a tiger-cat caught in a snare while marauding for prey.

"Doctor, you must come! It is my daughter. She will die, if you do not save her!"

The cry of the father awoke a sad echo in the heart of Laurvig. Without another word he followed the man, turned into a steep alley, and climbed a long dark staircase up to the attic into which his guide led him. By the light of an iron lamp which stood on one of the two chairs composing the chief furniture of the room, the doctor saw the sick girl—a beautiful creature of twenty years—huddled up in two short skirts, upon a mattress.

At the noise which they made in entering the wretched apartment, she pushed away the fragments of a red handkerchief knotted round her head and the long thick hair which had fallen over her face.

Her large black eyes alone seemed to be alive. Brilliant with a feverish sparkle, they wandered alternately, with a suppliant expression, from the Doctor to her father.

It was, indeed, the awful plague which had stolen into the life of that beautiful body. The skilled practitioner detected its presence at the first glance. He dispatched the father of Teresa to a druggist, ordering him to bring the needful revulsives, while he descended in haste to buy warm coverings of wool.

Never had he felt a more intense determination to baffle the enemy. He leant long over the young sufferer, the father crouching near him, mechanically watching his movements, while the weary physician practised on those cold limbs the violent reactions which possibly might recall them to life. He waited hours for signs of its return, and withdrew from his patient very late in the night, when the tranquility of the sick girl gave him hope.

An early hour the next day found Doctor Laurvig at the side of his patient. Deaf to the supplications of the miserable creatures who clamoured for his care, he fought two entire days for Teresa, against the inroad of the obstinate disease. The third day he was victor. Teresa was saved. His practised eye was certain of it, when he saw again the young life reassured in those great black eyes, in the supple movements of the beautiful limbs, and the carmine of a ripe pomegranate suffusing the lips while she tasted the food he had brought.

He left the grateful father, promising to return, and, as he turned the corner of Clata San Sebastiano, he whistled for his dog. As the animal did not appear, the Doctor mounted the stairs again, searched for him in the sick girl's garret, and afterwards questioned all the shopkeepers of the little street. Certainly, they knew Rampollo well; they had seen him that very morning; still, they could not give his master any news of him.

After vainly seeking him for an hour, the Norwegian took the road to his home, anxiously hoping that the dog might have gone there before him. But Rampollo was not to be found, and his master vainly looked for him all the day. In the evening he went to the police-station, related his story, and offered a large reward for the recovery of his faithful companion.

The chief of police had often met the Doctor in the populous flats which they frequented, for different purposes. He interested himself in the matter, and asked for circumstantial details.

Hardly had Laurvig finished his story, when the officer said:

"You have told me enough. Go to the house of Agostino Greco and leave something in his hand. This Agostino, the father of Teresa, is one of the worst of knaves. He is a porter on the quay; in his idle moments he lives by some trades that can be acknowledged, and by many that are usually kept secret. We have had our eye on him for a long time, and on his beautiful daughter, who is not much better than he.

"You have done them a great kindness, and they have stolen your dog; that is the order of things. He would steal anything. Do not seek elsewhere."

Laurvig mounted once more to the garret in the Calata San Sebastiano. By his glance and by his words he severely stirred the conscience of the old thief without too much disguising a suspicion, at which Agostino did not seem surprised. The Doctor went on with his talk, and then the man replied:

"Listen. You have saved my daughter. I would give my right hand to restore your dog. I will make it my business to find him. The policeman! Bah! With *him* you might search for the dog until the judgment day! As to myself, I know all the fellows that steal dogs. If they have already killed him, there is no remedy. But, if he is still alive and in Naples I will bring him to you before the end of the week, as sure as my name is what it is!"

Little convinced and less assured, Dr. Peter went back to his house, where he was now quite alone.

He forced himself, with difficulty, to leave it the following day to visit the sick. Death had taken his child; men had taken his friend; why disturb himself to succour the latter?

Saturday evening, as he sat musing at his window, throwing his small human trouble into the great sadness of the sea, a strident bark resounded on the road and set his heart beating. A few minutes later Rampollo bounded to the knees of his master with every demonstration of joy and tenderness that could be expressed by his tongue and the wagging of his tail. Behind the animal in the open door stood Agostino, twisting his red cap, with a smile of modest triumph.

"I told you that I would bring the dog back to you," he said. "Did the *police* find him? *I* found him. I know all dog-stealers!"

Recalled by that voice to his obligation of gratitude, Laurvig stopped caressing Rampollo. He went to his secretaire and took from a drawer several gold pieces and carried them to the man. Agostino drew back, and his face grew darker with an expression of displeased astonishment. As the Doctor's countenance indicated insistance, Agostino stopped him with a gesture of decision.

"No, none of that! You have saved my daughter; I have saved your dog. Everybody must have something to love; that is understood. We are even. Keep your money!"

Laurvig threw the money on the table, and returned to Greco with both hands cordially held out to him. "Pardon, and my thanks," he said. "Give me your hand."

"No, not that either. The hand of an honest man like you ought not to clasp the hand of a man like me! *Addio!*"

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He closed the door and disappeared. The next day an instinctive impulse carried Laurvig to the Calata San Sebastiano. Teresa was alone in the wretched garret. With a grave and pensive face, she coldly welcomed her benefactor.

"And your father—where is he?" inquired Laurvig.

"In prison," she answered. "They have just arrested him. A stab with his dagger, it appears."

The Doctor could not draw any further information from the poor girl. Obstinate in her silence, there was reproach in her glance. He repaired immediately to the police station, called for the chief, and questioned him regarding Agostino.

"Ah! that fellow!" replied that high functionary. "Yes, we have him at last! A good blow with his knife following a scuffle with one of his pals, the cobbler Girolamo, who follows, among other special pursuits, that of stealing dogs. As nearly as we can make it out by the lies of those knaves, they had stolen a fine animal belonging to you, I believe.

"Without doubt Agostino demanded his share. Girolamo refused to pay. Agostino tried to take off the dog by main force. In short, daggers were drawn, and the shoemaker has been accommodated by the hand of a master at the business. It will finish him up. By my faith! That was a good stab which delivered to us the wickeder of the two rogues, and rid us of the other."

Laurvig timidly advanced his version of the story. He succeeded only in making the chief smile, and understood that it would be useless to press the case. The officer had constructed the scene of the crime in his own imagination. Now, when a functionary has arranged the details of a crime according to his views, everybody knows that it is useless for meddlers to attempt modification.

The physician found his protest useless, and went away repeating to himself mechanically the phrase he had just heard—which was filled for him with a profound sense of tragic truth and cruel irony—a good stab!

He sought the magistrate, who told me this story. In the hope of throwing some light, he narrated the incidents after his own manner.

* * * * * *

"And what did you do with Agostino?" I demanded of my friend.

"What would you have had us do with him? We sent him to the galleys. Bless me! a dagger-thrust like that? And the beneficiary, the cobbler, is dead."

"Meanwhile, the justice of it," I began.

"Ah! there you are!" interrupted the magistrate. "If we listened to you, if justice split hairs, she would not cut off another head. Psychological analysis is one thing, my dear sir, and justice is quite another—a simple thing, mechanical, nothing more. Our clear Roman justice would trip at every step, if she embarrassed herself with sentimental subtleties.

"Besides, Laurvig was a strange character, and became more so after that adventure. He associated only with the rascals. One fine day he started for his own country with his dog and Teresa into the bargain. They say that he adopted her, and has married her to some *savant* at Bergen, and that he will leave her his fortune. Poor girl!

"But we intend to get a pardon for Agostino," the magistrate added in a lower tone.

"He deserves it! It was a good stab!"

JACK ROGERS.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

DR. JIM'S SECOND RAID.

DR. JAMESON had long since expiated the mad enterprise that ended so disastrously at Krugersdorp. He now commanded a fine body of South African horsemen, largely composed of the troopers who rode with him in the ill-fated Transvaal raid, and as the United States army was short of cavalry, "Dr. Jim's Regiment" was detailed for duty with General Smithson.

And these Afrikanders had a score to settle with the German Emperor. His unnecessary sympathy with the Boers, his unsought telegram condemning them, did not help to endear him to a gallant corps which, whatever the action of its leaders, at least tried to do that which it conceived to be its duty.

Dr. Jameson and his followers had entered upon the campaign with eagerness. Their daily hopes, their nightly dreams, centred upon the one object of their lives—they desired above all else to get even with the Kaiser.

And now, if this talk of approaching armistice were true, the chance was remote of balancing the account.

"He is only twenty miles away," growled Sir John Willoughby; "but he might as well be in China. Perhaps to-morrow we may be told off to act as his escort during a grand palaver."

"Perhaps to-night," said Dr. Jameson, who had been deep in thought for an hour after the transmission of the mysterious letter was noised abroad.

The other men in the mess tent were surprised at his serious tone, though they shared his keen annoyance at the threatened cessation of hostilities.

"To-night!" exclaimed Major Coventry. "Impossible. The letter, whatever it contains, cannot reach Her Majesty before eleven o'clock to-morrow, and it will take at least another hour to get to Lord Salisbury. Even a cable message will not enlighten the Duke until two p.m., at the earliest. That is what one of his staff told me just now."

"He was right," observed the Colonel, in his grave, preoccupied tone; "but Her Majesty and Lord Salisbury may be called upon to deal with a cable first."

None of the few officers present could longer doubt that their leader had some serious purpose behind his words.

Sir John Willoughby went to the door of the tent, walked round the outside to make sure there were no eavesdroppers and returned. Planting himself squarely before Dr. Jameson and said:

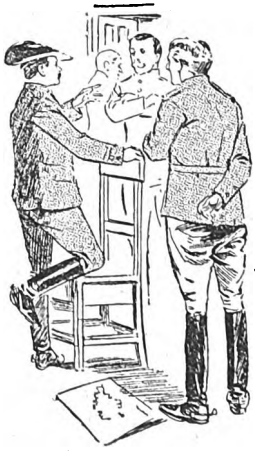
"Now, what it is?"

"It is this," was the reply. "I believe that by properly formulating our scheme and carrying it through regardless of personal consequences, we can capture him some time about 2.30 a.m."

Not a man needed enlightenment as to the individuality indicated by the personal pronoun. Comment was out of the question.

They simply waited for further explanation.

"The German officers who brought the letter," went on Dr. Jameson, "had some refreshment at the headquarters mess before they returned. They sat together unattended for a moment, and as I speak German well I could not help hearing their remarks to one another.



"I believe . . . we can capture him some time about 2.30 a.m."

"And this is the actual text of their conversation.

"The younger one said:

"'These English cannot conceal their astonishment.'

"The other answered:

"'Nor can the Emperor conceal his anxiety. He sleeps to-night at the headquarters of the 4th division, in the village of Westhausen, so as to be able to receive the reply at the earliest possible moment.' That is all."

"It's a lot," observed Sir John Willoughby thoughtfully.

"I don't see it," exclaimed a young captain, noted for his hard riding, his utter contempt of personal danger, and his thick head.

"No, old chap, I didn't think you would," said the Colonel with a quiet smile. "But you probably will see it before to-morrow morning."

The other men laughed, and Dr. Jameson continued:

"This is my plan. We select 300 of our hardest men and

best horses—men and animals up to forty miles with some hard knocks thrown in. I get permission from General Smithson—the Duke would refuse it—to conduct an extended reconnaissance, starting about eleven o'clock. Westhausen is exactly eighteen miles from here, and the country is practicable either by road or field. We walk the first ten miles, say 1.30 a.m.; we gallop the remaining eight, say 2.30; we stop for nothing; and when we reach Westhausen we surround the largest house where horses are picketed outside, and lights and orderlies knocking about show signs of an important occupant. We ourselves should carry the first explanation of the firing at the outposts. We enter the house, and if the Emperor is there, tie him on to a led horse and carry him off. If he is not there, well, we do the best we can. This time, gentlemen, there will be no dispatch-box.

"Always ante before the draw, boys," said a deep voice at the entrance. "If there's a strong game on deal me a hand," and Colonel Ritchie strode into the tent, looking quizzically at the startled group of conspirators, who were so engrossed in Dr. Jameson's words that they never heard the approach of the American cavalry leader. Much as they liked him they were annoyed at the interruption.

"A gentleman——" began Major Coventry angrily.

"A gentleman always knocks," laughed Ritchie, "but he can't if there ain't a door. You were all so interested that I thought someone was raising the crowd a hundred. But you're busy. Shall I quit?" and he turned to go.

"No, Colonel Ritchie," cried Dr. Jameson. "You shall stay. We can trust *you*, at any rate. If you decide against our proposal, promise that you will forget it."

"Shake!" said Ritchie, extending his hand. "But it will be a cold deal that leaves me out."

When he heard what was in the air he whooped in the most approved style of the Sioux nation.

"Great snakes!" he yelled. "I'd ride all the way on a circus horse. But my boys will lynch me when they hear I went without them."

"Select fifty whom you can trust absolutely, and we will reduce our contingent to make room for them. I can be sure of my men, but I am not so sure of so many horses, as that last dust-up with the Uhlans tired a lot of them."

Arrangements were now rapidly discussed, and the party broke up shortly afterwards, each officer having his clear and well-defined duties to perform. Above all else, every man taken on the expedition must thoroughly understand its desperate nature. Those who fell could not be cared for, those who were dismounted could not be carried, those who reached the goal must rigidly obey orders at all personal risk and sacrifice.

Not a man backed out who was asked to volunteer.

Colonel Ritchie was entrusted with the task of gaining General Smithson's permission for the "reconnaissance." The conversation between the two is worth reproducing.

"What's afoot?" said the United States Commander when the request was preferred.

"Well, General, it's this way," explained Colonel "Gu." "These Afrikander boys think they can ride a few. It's a fine night, with a weak imitation of a Californian moon, and perhaps we might find a stag grazing in the lowlands. It's a sort of deer hunt, with Uhlans in the background. Venison is in season just now, and our menu of roast beef, and boiled beef, and potted beef, and beef——"

"There. That will do," was the dry answer. "You're not lying so artistically as usual. If it wasn't for this confounded rumour of peace negotiations stopping all the fun I would not sanction this affair. You're up to mischief of some sort. When Jameson and you hunt together there's trouble brewing. But listen. Don't get yourself hurt."

With this grudging assent Ritchie thought it best to depart.

By some occult means the circle of conspiracy widened. Several officers in British regiments suddenly obtained a night's leave "on urgent private affairs," chargers were borrowed, when they happened to be well-known hunters, "just for the evening, old fellow," girths were carefully examined, surcingles scrutinised, stirrup-leathers tested, revolvers cleaned, swords sharpened, and huge suppers eaten.

Each officer and private carried a large supply of weak whisky and water—not for himself, but for his horse.

At eleven p.m. they mustered in two's and three's at a quiet rendezvous. They formed up rapidly in four troops, 320 of the finest cavalry soldiers that the world could produce, and mounted as no regiment of horse was ever mounted before.

There was no delay. "Fours right. Left wheel. Trot." Were the commands in rapid succession, and they left the precincts of the lines on the right wing occupied by the United States army.

Dr. Jameson, of course, was in command, with Sir John Willoughby as second, Colonel Ritchie and Major Coventry as squadron leaders, and the rest of the officers concerned in the Transvaal raid, assisted by a sprinkling of volunteers from British regiments, distributed among the four troops.

Once well beyond the outposts, and safe from interference, a halt was called.

Dr. Jameson briefly addressed his followers, fully and lucidly explaining his project, and finally calling upon anyone who did not care for the onerous personal conditions of the enterprise to turn back.

His speech was received with dead silence, for any combined testimony of approval was out of the question.

But somebody softly whistled the air, "We won't go home until morning," and there was a general snigger. Dr. Jameson himself joined in the laugh.

"I suppose I have been answered," he said. "Now, these are my final instructions. We walk for about nine miles. You can dismount and lead your horses, if you like, except the advance guard who will be relieved each half hour. You may smoke and talk quietly, but be momentarily on the alert for orders. I need hardly say that all orders must be instantly and absolutely obeyed."

Then the march commenced.

The way was easy to find, and a bright moon lit up the landscape for a considerable distance, so progress was rapid and uninterrupted.

At half-past one the force halted for five minutes for a general tightening up of girths and accoutrements. The muster roll was gone through and no one reported missing.

Then the whole party remounted and advanced, still at a walk, as they were only seven miles from Westhausen, the distance being somewhat less than Dr. Jameson had calculated from the map.

At six miles from the village they broke into a sharp trot; at five miles they were mistaken for scouting Uhlans, and allowed to reach the first outpost without being fired upon; at four miles they had a sharp tussle with a squadron of dragoons, whom they surprised in a small hamlet.

The pace then became a steady gallop, and they swept unimpeded through a brigade of infantry who wholly failed to realise the fact that a detachment of the enemy was riding through the shaded road that intersected their lines.

The church clock of Westhausen chimed the half-hour past two when the leading troop dashed into its only street, with its clusters of cottages and isolated residences of more pretentious character.

Right in the centre of the village stood a large house, usually occupied by the principal local landowner. In front and in the meadow at the rear were picketed over a hundred horses, and the moonbeams glinting from cuirass and helmet worn by several orderlies standing near the open door, revealed members of what was surely the Emperor's bodyguard.

"We've got him, by Jimini!" yelled Dr. Jameson, whose

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self-contained calm had now vanished beneath the spell of ungovernable excitement. There was no need for instructions. Nothing had been forgotten beforehand. Whilst the first troop knocked down the practically unarmed soldiers on duty, half of the second troop dismounted and rushed towards the building, their comrades holding their horses. No. 3 troop busied themselves in cutting the halters and heelropes of the tethered animals, and smacked them with the flat of their sabres to start them off in wild career, and No. 4 passed on up the street for a hundred yards, to prevent any interruption from that side.

The sentry at the door shot and killed the first trooper who ran up the steps, but a second later he was run through the heart, and a score of men were in the building. Some diverged right and left, others raced upstairs, and they found the Emperor in the first-floor front room, standing in bewildered attitude as he had risen from the camp bed, where he had laid himself, fully dressed, to snatch a brief rest after the fatigues of the day.

There was a lamp burning on the table, and to his practised eye no second glance was needed to explain the turmoil in the street and the sudden entry of these brown-coated armed men into his chamber.

He sprang to his sword, but before he could reach it a dozen hands held him fast, and his arms were rapidly pinioned behind his back.

Startled and utterly amazed, pale with weariness and anxiety, he was yet true to the demands of his exalted rank.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" he cried vehemently, speaking in English.

"It means, Your Majesty, that you are our prisoner, and you must accompany us this instant," said an officer.

"Yes, you've got ter quit, now, immediate," chimed in a San Franciscan who could not resist the temptation to bandy words with an Emperor.

"But the Duke of Connaught cannot have sanctioned these unwarrantable proceedings. I have but a few hours since written to the Queen——"

The Kaiser would have proceeded further, but the officer who had first spoken sternly broke in:

"Your Majesty, we have no time for argument. Will you walk or shall we carry you? You must decide at once."

"I will not, because I cannot, resist," was the reply, in a tone of such quiet dignity that it almost unnerved the man he addressed. In happier years they had met at Cowes.

Forthwith the party reached the street, and the Emperor, without another word being spoken, was lifted on to the magnificent charger provided for him, two troopers rode close on each side, and an imperative command recalled the scattered members of the detachment.

So quickly and effectually had the capture been carried out, that even yet there was no semblance of resistance in the vicinity of Westhausen.

The Emperor was placed in the centre of the third troop, and the whole party started back towards Lauenburg at a gallop. Half a mile from Westhausen a road deflected to the left, and Dr. Jameson led his men by this way in order to avoid the brigade of infantry they had passed *en route*. It was well he did so. A staff-officer returning from headquarters had recognised the uniforms of the last troop as they clattered by, and had given the alarm, whilst the general in command, although unable to fathom the real purport of the raid, scented danger to his royal master.

Troops were already advancing towards Westhausen at the double, and as there were over 10,000 men in the brigade, it is probable that not only every man in the British contingent would have been shot, but the Kaiser himself might have fared ill at the hands of his own men owing to their ignorance of the circumstances of the case.

"Dr. Jim," and his troopers, with their illustrious prisoner, were nearly four miles from Westhausen before they found a road that turned directly towards the British lines. It passed through a dense wood for some distance, and unexpectedly opened out on to a stretch of common.

Barely had the leading files left the shadow of the trees before they perceived in the distance the bright helmets of some Prussian dragoons, and the British horsemen were discovered at the same time.

The field telegraph, which was carried to high perfection in the German army, had warned the commander to be on the look-out for the party, whose numbers were correctly estimated, and he was now able to throw in their path nearly 600 stalwart Westphalians, well mounted, and eager to teach these marauders a lesson.

Neither he nor his men dreamt for a moment that the Kaiser was in the midst of the enemy.

The pace at which Dr. Jameson's squadrons travelled, the manner of their formation at the moment, the surprise of the *rencontre*, all contributed to confuse the issues of the cavalry combat that forthwith ensued.

One fact stood out boldly on behalf of the British. They knew the prize they had at stake.

This was no ordinary midnight scuffle between opposing vedettes. Outnumbered two to one by the Germans, each man who had followed Dr. Jameson in this memorable ride was ready to face singlehanded any odds that offered, and prepared to throw his life in the scale if that would suffice to turn the balance in favour of his comrades.

One order and one only was given.

"Cut your way through!" shouted the Colonel, and wedding example to precept, he clapped spurs to his horse to urge him along at top speed, and rode straight at the nearest batch of dragoons.

With a wild yell his men followed him, and, by sheer intuition, those in the rear knew what was going on in front.

In no wise unwilling for the game, the Germans were nevertheless unable to get their horses in rapid motion before the leading Britons were upon them, and the first batch of Westphalians disappeared as though they had been struck by lightning.

But the tremendous phalanx of men and horses behind, by its sheer density, soon rendered further progress impossible.

This consideration told both ways.

If it hindered the Englishmen, it also enabled more of them to reach the scene of conflict, and for a couple of minutes there was the heartiest give-and-take *mêlée* that the eyes of a soldier could wish to see.

The Emperor, secure in the midst of the third troop, which had been halted by Colonel Ritchie, watched the mad scene, with its fierce energy heightened by the uncertain light of the waning moon, with its hoarse cries of rage and keener notes of agony, the neighing and screaming of wounded horses, the clash of sword against sword or helmet, and he raged at the impotence of his position.

"Cut your way through!" shouted the Colonel.

He would have bartered his kingdom at that moment to be free and at the head of his gallant troops.

Dr. Jameson, bareheaded and breathless, blinded with blood from a cut across the forehead, suddenly heard Ritchie's voice, quite close to him, shouting some orders.

"Is he safe?" cried the Colonel.

"Yes," was the answer, "and by thunder he's going slick through, now."

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Jameson managed to clear his eyes and after a moment's consultation he rode again into the press of the fight. He is endowed by nature with a high penetrating voice and he now put all his force into a final command:

"Leading squadron. Outwards—wheel!"

Some of the men heard him, others did not, but those who understood repeated the order. Its object was quickly made apparent.

No. 4 Troop, composed entirely of Americans, now rode forward in half-sections, every man with his sword returned, and a six-chambered revolver in each hand.

Forcing their chargers with knee and spur, firing point blank into the mass of the Westphalian cavalry, and practically making every shot to tell upon a horse or a man, the United States soldiers succeeded, as with no other arm they could have succeeded, in clearing a path for themselves.

Followed closely by the Emperor's escort they smashed their way through to the farther side of the common, and Major Coventry's squadron, now sadly diminished in numbers, faced round to stop pursuit.

"I am Dr. Jameson."

This part of their task was not a difficult one.

Nearly one-third of the Germans had fallen, and there were few among the survivors who did not bear upon their persons some marks of the contest.

The Emperor during this dramatic scene, had not uttered a word. He disdained even to cry for help as he was hurried through the press of his own troops, and he rode quietly forwards for nearly an hour after all danger of immediate pursuit had passed without exhibiting any sign of the burning thoughts that possessed his soul.

At a midway farmhouse a brief halt took place, and the Emperor's arms were unbound.

He was offered some slight refreshment, which he pleasantly accepted. Then he said, with a smile, to the officer who had arrested him, and who never left his side for a moment.

"That was a good fight!"

"Superb, Your Majesty."

"You were better mounted than my men. How many do you number?"

"All told, 320, Your Majesty."

"Ah. And you cut your way through twice as many of my best soldiers. No wonder you dare to face the world in arms. What casualties have you sustained?"

"I fear, your Majesty, that we have left 130 men on the field. That is a rough estimate made *en route*."

The Emperor sighed deeply. "It is a terrible price. And my own brave fellows, too. Even more of them, by necessity. Believe me, Captain, I am not worth it."

At 5.15 a.m., as the first notes of the *reveille* pealed forth in the grateful morning air, the gallant band, now so woefully diminished in numbers, rode into the British lines. The Emperor was at once taken to a spacious tent and invited to enter. He was followed by a slightly-built but active-looking man, whose forehead was roughly bandaged, and who was haggard from loss of blood, want of sleep, and extreme physical exhaustion. He stood for a moment looking at the Emperor.

"I am now going, your Majesty," he said quietly, "to announce your arrival to the Duke of Connaught. Meanwhile I have taken every precaution to secure your comfort, and can only express my regret if the rude necessities of the night were unduly irksome. Here, however, you will find every convenience," and, with a comprehensive sweep of his hand, the newcomer indicated the surroundings.

The Emperor followed his gesture, and the eyes of both men fell at the same instant upon a number of telegraph forms, ostentatiously displayed on a camp writing-table.

Then the Kaiser spoke. "May I ask," he said, "to whom I owe my capture and these—these delicate attentions?"

"Your Majesty, I am Dr. Jameson."

* * * * *

At nine o'clock that morning mounted orderlies from the War Office galloped furiously through the streets of London with imperative summonses to the members of the Council of National Defence.

At ten they were gathered in Lord Salisbury's room at the Foreign Office, and the sensational telegram from the Duke of Connaught was read. His announcement was received with silent amazement. Sir William Harcourt, bending forward with his hand over his ear that not a word might escape him, was the first to speak. "A most interesting example of historic irony," he said, nodding gravely.

"Telegrams figure largely in the life of the German Emperor," observed Lord Wolseley.

"The incident renders an already complex position more difficult." It was Lord Salisbury who uttered these words.

The Council were deeply engaged in discussing this unexpected development when a secretary entered with a special letter from Her Majesty. He handed it to the Prime Minister, who slowly read the autograph document within, and then, with equal deliberation, examined an inclosure. It was the Kaiser's letter to the Queen.

In simple phrase it requested that a direct representative of Her Majesty might be sent to Germany to arrange the terms of an honourable peace, and thus bring to an end a needless conflict fraught with disaster to both nations.

For a little while consideration of the dispatch was impossible. Each turned to his neighbour to eagerly express his astonishment and delight. But at last collective deliberation was resumed.

"Gentlemen," said Lord Salisbury, "before proceeding to discuss the conditions of peace, it is important that we should decide upon the person to perform this onerous mission. I am convinced that we shall best serve the interests of England, and at the same time meet the wishes of the Emperor, if we ask H.R.H the Prince of Wales to undertake it."

All eyes instinctively turned in one direction.

"Gentlemen," said the Prince, rising from his chair, "if this be your pleasure, I am ready."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE PRINCE AND THE EMPEROR.

ON the afternoon of the day on which the Council of National Defence met in London, an important telegram was handed to the English Commander-in-Chief at Lauenburg. When he had read it, he summoned General Sir Richard Sheridan and gave him a few brief instructions.

"I am ordered," he said, "to set the German Emperor at liberty without delay. It is a duty which delicacy forbids my performing in person. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will proceed at once to his Majesty and inform him of the decision arrived at in London. You will provide an escort of cavalry and see that he is conveyed, with as little observation as possible, to the German lines. You will also inform him that his letter has duly reached Her Majesty, and that the Council of National Defence has agreed to a proposal of Lord Salisbury that the Prince of Wales shall proceed to Germany and meet the Emperor to discuss the

terms of an armistice. His Royal Highness will arrive here to-morrow and will at once communicate with him as to the place and conditions of *rencontre*. I leave it to your good sense to do all that courtesy and discretion suggest."

Sir Richard concealed what emotion he might have felt at this news, and selecting a guard of honour, proceeded to the Emperor's tent.

The Kaiser had sufficiently recovered his good-humour. He was a soldier born, who knew how to submit to the strange reverses of battle, and he listened to the communication made to him with grave respect.

"I beg you to thank the Duke," he said in reply, "for the consideration he has shown me. I trust that German soldiers will never show themselves less lacking in such honourable courtesies of war."

Sir Richard restrained a smile. He was Saxon enough to scout the possibility that the German or any other Emperor could ever be in such a position as to enable him to exhibit courtesy of this kind to an English General.

With all becoming marks of respect, he formed up his guard of honour and rode off with his illustrious charge. Early the following morning the German army received back its wandering chief, almost before it had missed him, and Prince von Hohenlohe was so profoundly relieved that he did not during the whole day make a single reference to the military genius of his old friend, Von Moltke. The Kaiser found no difficulty, on his part, in controlling his exuberance of spirits or the undue emphasis of his opinions. He only once openly referred to the incident.

"The British," he remarked to the Prince, "say little about their colonial empire. But their object lessons are admirable. I do not wonder that they have seized the earth if they breed such amateurs as Dr. Jameson."

The old statesman grunted and took a long pull at his beaker of Munich beer. He proffered no reply, but he muttered to himself:

"*Their* amateurs found empires; *ours* do their best to lose them!"

Luckily the Kaiser did not hear him, and the Prince, much relieved by his aside, filled his pipe once more and smoked on with great content.

Towards nightfall some excitement towards the rear of the British camp announced that something unusual was happening. It was noticed, too, that the Duke of Connaught with his whole staff had stationed himself at the temporary depôt which marked the terminus of the military station. Through the army there rushed the welcome news that the heir to the throne had already arrived. That ever popular favourite, the Prince of Wales, was now in the midst of the troops who worshipped him so well.

A salute greeted him as he stepped from the carriage, in the uniform of a Field Marshal, and grasped the hand of his brother. Then, forgetting restraints of discipline as they recognised the well-known face, a mad shout went up from ten thousand throats. In such wise the British Tommy broke in to add his own spontaneous welcome and cheer Old England in the person of her Prince.

The latter saluted in response. And then his brother, placing his hand upon the arm of General Smithson, said:

"Permit me, before anything else is done, to present to you a brave officer and a skilled commander to whom I owe many debts of gratitude, and with me all Englishmen."

"General," observed the Prince, extending his hand, and not without a smile, "is it consistent with your republican principles to bestow a welcome upon a grateful ally?"

"Believe me, sir," replied the impetuous Smithson with fervour, "if we saw much of you on the other side, we should all turn royalists to a man!"

His Royal Highness made a laughing \retort, and the three rode off to headquarters.

(To be continued.)

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Mr. R. W. HEALEY, 35 Queen Street, South Bank,

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NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.

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P. F.—The best county in England for cycling from an all round point of view is Lincolnshire. The roads are admirably suited to cycling, the scenery is often very beautiful, and there are scores of places of great historic interest.

H. G.—No bird of prey has the gift of song.

OLD STAGER would like to know if I can tell him which feature of the face shows signs of age least.———The nose. Bone and cartilage enter so largely into its construction and determine its characteristics, that it undergoes little perceptible change, as a rule, with the lapse of years. Next to the nose, probably the ears, as a rule, show the fewest and least obvious signs of old age.

W. L. D. asks: "Why do some people stick out the little finger when holding light articles?"———If you will observe closely you will find that it is people generally with short little fingers who do this. Those with such fingers rarely use them except when they grasp with the hand as a whole. In handling an article such as a teacup there seem always to be attempts at balancing the hand by aid of the little finger, in the same way as a fencer balances the rest of his body with his disengaged arm, and at the same time it is kept out of harm's way.

G. M.—There is a very important vestige of the toll system still existing in "the thorough toll" at Newcastle-on-Tyne. The importance of this toll is shown by the fact that it brings in more than £5,000 a year. This also shows what an inconvenience it must be, and the tradesmen of the city are agitating for its abolition. The toll dates from the reign of Henry II., who granted a charter for it, and it has since been confirmed by Act of Parliament.

J. G. J.—Many of the cast-off uniforms of our soldiers are exported to Africa for trading purposes amongst the Kaffirs.

BLACK would like to know where coal is cheapest and where it costs most. This is to settle a friendly dispute.———It is dearest in South Africa, while in China it is cheaper than in any other country in the world. But the march of civilisation and progress is bringing about a change in both places. The supply is increasing in South Africa, thus reducing the price, while in China the coal mines are getting into the hands of Europeans, who are not content with the small profits made by the Chinese out of their hidden stores of fuel.

LAURA writes to ask if there are any species of flowers which give out light.———Several. Nearly every one is familiar with the glow which is given out in the dark by various kinds of fungi. The ordinary nasturtium is another example of this peculiar irregularity, while the common marigold has been seen to glow brilliantly, the light seeming to play over the petals with quick changes. The best time for observing this phenomenon is on a night succeeding a sunny day, for there is no light after rain. The light increases in intensity during July and August.

H. D.—The healthiest spot in the world appears to be a little French village named Aumone. There are only forty inhabitants, twenty-three of whom are over eighty, and one is a centenarian.

O. S.—It is difficult to say exactly how many people in England ride bicycles. I believe the number to be something like a million and a half, at the least.

H. M.—The "terrier" which has puzzled you is the name given to a document that is, or is supposed to be, kept at every church. This document contains particulars of the income of the benefice, especially of glebe lands, which gives rise to the name of "terrier" — from the Latin word "terra."

"WHY is it," asks L. E., "that we never hear of members hissing when they disapprove of certain points in a fellow member's speech in Parliament?"———There is a rule of the House against it. That rule dates as far back as 1604, and is to the effect that whoever hisses or disturbs a man in his speech shall answer for it at the Bar as a breach of order and contempt of the House. This has put a stop to hissing, but there are many notable instances of members being "disturbed in their speech" by other means hardly less objectionable.

K.G.—The ribbon of the Garter is not generally conferred upon peers of lower dignity than earls. The only commoner upon whom the decoration has been bestowed was Sir Robert Walpole, who was Prime Minister during part of the first half of last century.

CYCLIST.—The largest cycling school in the world is probably the "Palais Sport" in Paris. The course is 1,000 yards long. A spiral pathway rises from the main floor to the roof, and is divided into two paths, for ascending and descending. Each pathway is inclosed on both sides by a high screen, which is painted to represent rural scenery.

CRICKET.—The distance between the wickets has never varied since the earliest records of the game; it has always been twenty-two yards.

H. L.—Certainly, if the umpire of a football or cricket match finds he has made a palpably wrong decision, he is at liberty to alter it.

C. T.—There are three hundred and thirty-four deer parks in England.

GERALD.—I know a good deal about bicycles and bicycle tyres, for I have been a keen rider for the past ten years. The tyre you mention is a second grade one. Dunlop's are unquestionably the most trustworthy for your purpose. You are mistaken in believing it is necessary to pump a Dunlop tyre to any particular degree of hardness to suit the state of the road. If you only partly inflate it, the tendency for the tyres to slip on greasy roads is very great, besides which they are liable to puncture and wear out more quickly. The tyres should be pumped so hard that when the rider is on the saddle it should not be depressed at all. Therefore, the amount of pumping depends entirely upon the weight of the rider. You can get a lot of information of this sort from a nicely got-up little pamphlet sent free by the Dunlop people from 14 Regent Street, W.C.

A.—On the average 111 platelayers are killed every year on the railways of the United Kingdom.

R. G. H.—Egypt is the only country in the world where there are more men than women. The male sex in the dominion of the Khedive exceeds the female by 160,000.

R. M. H.—It would be impossible for you to obtain a directory of St. Petersburg, for there is not such a thing in existence.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 526. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 28TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

Obstinate Indigestion:

Its unpleasant Symptoms, with Illustrations of Cures in chronic and long-standing cases.

You awake in the morning more tired than when you went to bed, with an unpleasant taste in the Mouth, and the Tongue coated and dry. You have no Appetite for Breakfast—even the little food that is taken produces general discomfort, with pain and distension.

During the morning a faint sensation is experienced at the pit of the Stomach. There is a dull, sleepy feeling, and often an attack of Giddiness. The Face is flushed, the Complexion sallow, and the Skin disfigured by blotches. You feel irritable, out of sorts generally, have a dull Headache, and are greatly depressed in Spirits.

Numbers of people are suffering seriously from Indigestion and its results, when one bottle of Guy's Tonic would bring about a prompt and permanent cure. A few doses will do more for a Weak Stomach than a prolonged course of any other medicine. Nothing can be used with so much certainty in obstinate cases of Delicacy; in fact, no one need remain uncured who will carry out the simple instructions which accompany each bottle of Guy's Tonic.

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"Tate Schools, Wexford.
"I have received inestimable "benefit from Guy's Tonic. The "medicine has only to be known "to be thoroughly appreciated. "I have been subject to Indigestion for seven or eight years, "and I have never got any real "relief till now.
"H. CANNING, EX. R. W. J."

"Indigestion for 10 Years."

"Netherton Iron Works, "near Dudley.
"Six months ago my Wife was "under the Doctor for a month. "She had been suffering from "Indigestion for ten years; but "I am pleased to tell you that "after taking three or four doses "of Guy's Tonic she says she has "not felt so well for years.
"E. BYWATER."

"Suffered Twenty Years."

"Sutton Bridge.
"My Wife for twenty years has "suffered from Indigestion. She "has been trying Doctors and all "sorts of medicine, *but got worse.* "This winter she has been very "low-spirited, and the eating of "a very small biscuit only has "caused Pain and Sickness. Seeing your advertisement, she "thought she would try Guy's "Tonic. She did so, and I can "safely say she is better than she "has been for years. Since taking "Guy's Tonic her Appetite has "improved, and she is decidedly "stronger. "J. T. ROSE."

"Suffered Sixty Years."

MR. HENRY SALMON, of Coxley House, Wells, Somerset, writes:

"For sixty years or more I "have suffered from Indigestion, "Wind, and Pain in the Side and "Pit of the Stomach, which at "times made me *almost wish I* "*was dead*—in fact, I have often "wished I was out of it. I heard "of Guy's Tonic, took one bottle, "left off Tea, took a glass or two "of cider a day (not more), and "before I had taken the last dose "of Guy's Tonic *I was free from* "*pain.* I have had a second "bottle of Guy's Tonic, and *am* "*quite relieved.*

"Suffered a Lifetime."

"Bishopstowe, Sussex.
"Having suffered *nearly all my* "*life* from Indigestion, and never "having found anything to do "me good till I was advised to "take Guy's Tonic, I am writing "you my grateful Thanks for the "Benefit I have had from Guy's "Tonic, and recommending it to "all my friends.
"M. J. JONES."

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Velvet-trimmed Costume.—Consists of fashionably-made Skirt and Bodice, tight fitting with full front, tastefully trimmed with Velvet and Pretty Buttons. GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY. This Costume is made in the Spécialité Serge, in Black, Navy, Electric, Blue, Blue-Green, Fawn, Brown, Myrtle, Crimson, Bronze-Green, and Purple. Costume complete, **10/6**; Carr 6d. extra. Skirt only, **5/6.** Carr., 5d. extra.

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Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3; three assorted 1/8.
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SHORT STORIES

No. 526.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending January 28th, 1899.

A Shattered Idol.

I was making my way home from the East by easy stages, and had accepted the invitation of my friend Donald Carmichael to pay him a visit in Florence, where he had made his home for the past five or six years.

One afternoon, when we were on our way to the lovely heights of Fiesole, my attention was arrested by a shop window containing the most exquisite bits of sculpture, as well as plaster casts of the best antique works, that were marvels of skill and artistic taste.

"Stop a minute, Carmichael," I exclaimed, dashing into the shop.

The proprietor, a handsome, stately man, no longer young, and yet in full possession of his manly vigour, with courteous, dignified manners, rose from his comfortable arm-chair in which he had been enjoying his *siesta*, and waited upon me with a grandiloquent reserve that was totally unlike the usual avidity of Italian shopkeepers.

I completed my purchases and he bowed me to the door with the air of a prince. Donald was waiting outside in evident impatience, and we had hardly gone a yard before he burst out: "Conceited blackguard, that! I should like to duck him in a horse-pond!"

I tried to defend my stately art dealer by saying:

"He is evidently above his position. He ought to have been a sculptor himself, not a shop-keeper."

"Oh, you don't know Fabiani! He's beneath contempt. His whole success and well-being—he has the best business of the kind in Florence—are founded upon a social crime!"

"A crime!" I repeated incredulously, struck by the bitter emphasis of his words.

"Yes, a crime. It's rather a long story, but it will beguile the tedium of waiting for the electric tram, if you care to hear it. Thirty years ago, there lived in an old

EDITED BY C. Arthur Pearson

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palace not far from here the Marchese di Fiorelli and his young daughter, Gianetta. They were the last of their race, and had inherited the ruin wrought by their reckless ancestors as the only appendage to their ancient name.

"The household consisted merely of an old female servant, who did the marketing and prepared their frugal meals, and her son, whose duties were various; the principal of them being the honour of taking the Marchese and his daughter for their daily afternoon drive in the old carriage upon which were emblazoned the arms of the House of Fiorelli, drawn by an ancient steed, whose condition seemed to match the fallen fortunes of its master.

"No one but themselves knew the daily sacrifices that were made to keep up this one outward symbol of departed glory. It was the only joy of the old man's heart, the one bright spot in the darkness of his beggary, to take his seat in his family coach and drive to the public gardens, where he would dismount, and, taking his daughter on his arm, walk up and down listening to the music for an hour or so.

"And Gianetta had her own delight in these daily expeditions, for their way lay past a sculptor's studio, and at the large window was ever to be seen the handsome face and faultless form of Beppo Fabiani, the lazy model-apprentice, who, in those days, was fonder of casting love glances than sticking to his work.

"Pretty Gianetta had known nothing but age and unlovely poverty in her short life, and the ardent glances shot from Beppo's lustrous eyes stirred her foolish heart, till she looked back with bashful tenderness, and looks grew into smiles and silent greetings.

"At last they met, and the stolen fruit was sweet to her guileless inexperience. Old Caterina, the housekeeper, hurt her foot, and was unable even to hobble to market, so the Marchese was roused out of his habitual study of the family archives so far as to give his consent to Gianetta going out to do the marketing alone, provided she kept clear of the more crowded streets.

"For some days she obeyed his instructions, and then the longing for change, the thirst for excitement, which is so strong in youth, the desire to realise her beautiful dream, to approach the object of her constant thoughts, drove her wilful little feet past the sculptor's door. It was mid-day. Nearly everyone was taking their siesta, and the street was deserted. There could be no harm when there was no one about—but Beppo was lounging under the awning at the open door.

"Her heart beat wildly, and she lowered her eyes as she passed him, though she could feel his burning glance upon her, and before she had gone many steps she turned and stole a furtive look at the hero of her dreams. He smiled and slowly started to follow her.

"She quickened her pace, and, like a frightened fawn, almost ran to escape from that which, in her heart, she desired so earnestly, till she found herself in a quiet little street that ended in blank wall with Beppo standing before her.

"He addressed her in a tender, deferential way, and bent to kiss her hand as if she had been his liege lady. Fascinated by his beauty and subtle charm, she gave herself up to the joy of his presence, and her innocent day-dream merged into the love of her life.

"They met again, almost daily in the heat of the noonday sun, and Gianetta's love grew with each meeting. To Beppo it was a new sensation to find himself in the society of a high-born girl, who combined with her patrician charm the simplicity of a peasant maid, and soon his ambition and cupidity were aroused. The daughter of a Marchese, who drove by every day in his own carriage, would surely be a good match for him, Beppo Fabiani, who had only his beauty to recommend him.

"In a few weeks he began to talk of marriage, gently, insinuatingly, with hints at the alternative of an eternal separation that made the girl ready to make any sacrifice for him, and though Gianetta knew her father too well to hope for his consent to such an alliance, she trusted to his fatherly love to pardon the deed when done.

"Beppo's cunning soon found a plan, and it was arranged that on the following Sunday she was to feign a headache and remain in the carriage while her father took his stroll in the gardens. As soon as he was out of sight, Giannetta was to slip out and join her lover at their trysting place, where he would have a hired conveyance in readiness to take them to the village of Rifredi, and from there they would appeal to the Marchese.

"All went well, and the afternoon sun was pouring into the little inn parlour where the lovers were rejoicing in their success, when the tall, spare figure of the Marchese darkened the low doorway. His coachman had told him something was wrong, and they had set off in pursuit as soon as possible.

"Gianetta was so intoxicated with her love and admiration for the handsome Beppo, that she was blind to the grief and anger in her father's eyes, and sprang forward to receive his blessing on the union to be so shortly consummated.

"The grave old man put her gently from him, and bade her wait in an adjoining room while he spoke to her companion. He closed the door carefully behind her to save her from the pain of hearing the interview, never realising the difference between those ramshackle walls and the solid masonry of his own palace.

"'And now, sir,' he said calmly, turning to his would-be son-in-law, who was standing in an easy, graceful pose near the window, 'you have helped my daughter into this romantic situation, but you will, of course, see that it is an impossible one?'

"'I love your daughter—and pray—' began Beppo.

"'None of that nonsense,' interrupted the Marchese sternly. 'Are you in a position to make a home for her? You must understand clearly that I can give her no dowry, save her honourable name.'

"'We should not want much,' faltered Beppo, evidently taken aback, 'only just enough to start me in business.'

"'I am utterly ruined,' continued the old man. 'The little I could raise might serve to give you a start *alone*, but not as a married man.'

"'What do you mean, Eccellenza?'

"'I mean that I will compensate you for your disappointment on condition that you never seek to approach my daughter again. I must have your written promise.'

"Gianetta listened for the indignant refusal that she believed would burst from her lover's lips; but, instead, her heart was chilled and her love tortured by a base haggling over the terms of the bargain. At last the sum was agreed upon, the time and place of payment were fixed, and one of the men left the room.

"Was it Beppo or her father? She neither knew nor cared. She hated them both equally for the time, and sank upon the hard couch with her hands pressed to her ears lest she should hear more jarring sounds.

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"When she came to herself her father was bathing her temples, and said gently:

"'Come home, my child.'

"She let him do with her what he would, and they drove back to the city through the sweet-scented summer's night in the shaky old carriage with its time-honoured coat-of-arms on the panels.

"She leant back in hard, tearless misery, till the old man took her hands in his and said in broken tones:

"'Yes, my little one. Men are base—worse than the beasts of the field, sometimes, in their sordid cruelty.'

"Then she knew how his proud heart had suffered too, and that the outward calm with which he had received the blow was born of a series of life-long humiliations. She pressed her burning lips to his cold, withered hand, and nestled close to his side till they reached home.

"Gianetta kept her room for some days after this, and when she again resumed her place as mistress of the house she found her father had discontinued his daily drives. Upon inquiry she discovered that both horse and carriage and all that appertained to them had been sold the day after that memorable excursion to Rifredi."

* * * * *

A week or so after Donald Carmichael had told me this pathetic story, he took me to dine with a great friend of his, "the most fascinating woman in Florence" as he called her. The Marchesa Rudolfi, the rich widow of a man who had died in the War of Independence, was nearer fifty than forty, and she employed no artifice to conceal the advance of years, wherein, perhaps, lay part of her charm.

She lived in the best possible style, and her well-appointed house at once suggested the atmosphere of home, just as she herself invited confidence. There was that in her genuine good-fellowship that made you long to tell her your troubles, and from certain lines in her face, you knew she had passed through the fire of pain.

Our conversation after dinner turned upon social pleasures, and I remarked upon the apparent fondness of the Florentiners for displaying themselves in gorgeous equipages day after day and hour after hour.

"How is it one never sees you grace the gay throng, Eccellenzia?" I asked lightly.

"I do not keep a carriage," she replied quickly, with a painful contraction of her expressive features.

As we were walking home I mentioned the incident to Carmichael.

"It was an unfortunate topic. Her maiden name was Gianetta di Fiorelli," he answered quietly.

Then I remembered where I had seen her before. It was in a bookseller's shop. She came in and asked for a classical work, and while the man was finding it she took up a new volume in a red cover lying on the counter and glanced at the title.

In a moment her lips curled and she threw it down in disdain. After she had left the shop I was curious enough to look and see what had evoked her scorn. It was a work by a popular author, entitled, "The History of a Passion," and I had hardly laid the book down when she had re-entered the shop, and was asking for the very novel she had so lately disdained.

Did she cherish any tender regret for the passion of her youth, as she did penance for the sacrifice her father had made to save her and the honour of their race?

MARY FERMOR.

THE LILY MAID.

WING TEE had come a long distance to cast her lot among us, and in coming she had learnt many things; among others, that what may be mere amusement to a man is fatal to a woman. Huie Chan had incumbered our shores many years, and he also had learnt a few things, but the one was the learning of the woman, while the other was only the learning of the man.

Before adjusting this newly-acquired assortment of miscellaneous learning, Wing Tee set about to accomplish her very laudable purpose in coming to our coast. The Australian missionaries who had penetrated into Wing's domain had lived on the fat of the land, and had introduced their English religion. They had, furthermore, sought to abolish many objectionable native customs, notably the worship of ancestors. In fact, after living among the Australians for a time, Wing soon came to understand that reverence or even common respect for one's parents or ancestors was a thing quite unheard of in the western world, and there were many other prospects quite as alluring.

The good missionaries had made much of the youthful Wing Tee. They had taught her to read and write, and had instructed her in their religion, and had finally declared her converted from the faith of her fathers. Then it was decided that she should be educated to become a missionary, too; accordingly, several struggling foreign missionary societies were saddled with the responsibility and expense of educating the ambitious young Wing in order that she might some day return to her own country and work among her people. And she must be transported to Sydney to be educated.

The lady managers of the foreign missionary board devoted themselves gladly to the care and culture of the Chinese girl, and were well repaid by her industry on becoming Australianised. But, unfortunately, aside from being industrious, Wing Tee was very fair.

* * * * * *

She was pleased to find such a charming bit of Pekin set down in this big city To her surprise, there

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were the same people, the same manners and customs, the same language, and the same delightful odours—the foreign devils called them nauseous smells—that she had left in her dear Pekin. But her one all-absorbing thought was to study and learn so that she might be a missionary, and go back to her own people and live on the fat of the land.

The lady missionaries watched her rapid progress with great pride, and remarked her sound conversion when she repudiated with a fitting horror the heathen practice of destroying the superfluous daughters of a family, and cheerfully accepted the civilised doctrine of the eternal condemnation of unbaptised infants. She was rapidly becoming enlightened.

* * * * *

Huie Chan made this discovery one morning on his way up Sacramento Street, when looking along the high balconied windows blossoming with Chinese lilies, he saw among the round little yellow faces of the flowers another face, somewhat larger, but scarcely less round or less yellow than they. Such a discovery, to be sure, is not unusual. In fact, some such discovery is the inevitable first act of every human comedy; it began with Adam, and will probably be the last thing to stop when time shall cease to be. If both the discoverer and the discovered are foolish, it usually ends in a romance; if only one is foolish and the other wise, it may result in a tragedy; but if both are wise, it usually ends in—nothing at all.

In this case it was not Huie Chan who was wise. He spent dreaming days and sleepless nights wondering who this "lily-maid," as he fondly called her, might be. As for Wing, she had not seen his fatuous smile when he looked up, and had only noticed as he passed that he was fat and walked like a duck.

Huie Chan was a prosperous barber with a flourishing fish-stall in the rear of his shop, and as the lily-maid was always at her window when he passed, he could attribute no more worthy object for her being there than to watch for him; consequently, one morning, instead of continuing on his way past the sweetshop, the restaurant, the basket-maker, to his own little hole-in-the-wall, with its mixture of soap, fish and pomades, he stopped at the low-browed doorway, and made his way up to the door that corresponded with a certain window.

Wing Tee was surprised. She looked up from her book, still conning in her mind the ten commandments, and was not pleased to see her visitor. Being a man, Chan was capable of seeing only one side of a situation, and that his own. He was glad to be there, therefore the lily-maid must be glad to have him there; but the book was not closed, and Wing Tee's eyes were raised only occasionally to answer some platitude, for—she was learning: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

The first visit was not a great success, nor the next; but Chan, nothing daunted, persevered morning, noon, and night.

Finally, Miss Wing was forced to tear her mind from the contemplation of her "thou shalt nots" long enough to consider ways and means of bringing Chan's attentions to a stop. She might lock the door—yes, and to make sure she would tack up a notice, a little pink card, which should say in black characters, "Please do not disturb me."

Accordingly, the appeal for peace was posted on the door at Chan's usual hour of intrusion. And scarcely had the sound of the hammer ceased when Mr. Chan came puffing up the stairs.

"This," he said to himself, "must be intended for some of those babbling lady missionaries, although it does happen to be written in very good Pekinese."

But although Chan was ponderous of build, he was nimble of wit. The door was securely locked, but the transom was open, and through it came the sound of a little smothered giggle.

A table near the door offered the solution, a chair left in the hall made the second step quite easy, if only the table could be induced to bear the double weight.

* * * * *

Aha! his prayer-wads had not stuck for nothing. The table creaked and groaned, but, nevertheless, lent itself to his purpose, and once mounted thereon he could almost reach the transom; then, with the chair on the top of the table, he could put his head quite into the room. That "love laughs at locksmiths" is doubtless as true in the east as in the west, but the oriental laugh unfortunately has not always the desired effect upon the occidental lock.

As poor Chan had expected, the lily-maid was in her usual place by the window, her eyes glued to her book. Giving himself a moment to enjoy in anticipation her surprise at seeing him, he prepared to make his best bob—a bow was impossible—when, to his horror, the jar brought down the transom. A sudden wriggling to free himself sent the table and chair to the floor with a crash, and brought the transom down tighter on his precious neck.

The lily-maid sat motionless. Another wriggle and another tightening. A gentle, gurgling sound finally caused the lily-maid to raise her eyes, but she did not jump nor scream. She surveyed the intruder with unwonted interest. The staring eyes were fixed on her in an agony of appeal. He was certainly very fat; the eyes were scarcely more goggle than usual, and the face, always ugly, was not much worse in purple tones than yellow.

If she made an outcry, and called someone to his rescue, he would perhaps be sufficiently recovered in a few days to continue his visits; if she did nothing, he could not last more than a few moments longer, and she would then be able to pursue her catechism lessons uninterrupted.

The gurgling thing in the transom still followed her with beseeching eyes, the purple tones grew darker and spotty, then the eyes rolled up in a most unpleasant manner, showing a lower rim of white. When the tongue began to loll out of the half open mouth, the lily-maid lost interest in the Thing. Then the gurgling subsided into a faint, spasmodic puffing, and finally ceased altogether.

When satisfied there was no danger of any further interruption from what had once been Chan, she turned her back upon It, and bent her eyes upon her book, the gift of the lady missionaries, for she had reached the sixth now, and repeated to herself triumphantly: "Thou shalt not kill! Thou shalt not kill!"

FRANK GRIMSHAW.

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An Ungentlemanly Tiger.

THE royal Malay tiger is no gentleman. If he were, the following would never have been told.

Punda-Tsang was an innkeeper. He was sole proprietor of the Ballawari-Dak, which is a very big name for a very small native hotel about sixty miles north of Penang, and on the high road to the Bukit, or hill-country. The quaint little structure clung to the mountain side like a swallow's nest, high over the jungle-bedded Sungei, whose foaming, crashing torrents came down from the upper mountains like an endless charge of white cavalry to the sea.

Punda was a good sort of a Malay, which means a bad sort of anything else. That is, he would plunder only on the securest principles, and never quarrel with a bigger man nor a better armed one than he. In this he differed from other Malays, who would plunder and knife upon no principle or provocation whatever, if they thought there was a ten-anna piece to be gained.

But a deeper reading of this prosperous Boniface of the jungle revealed the fact that he was capable of love, yes, even a tender human affection; and that little Iali, his five-year-old daughter, was the object of a worship in his heart even more fervent than that which he bestowed upon the five home-made clay gods before which, in a dark corner of the Dak, he burned a vast amount of thought ill-smelling stuff.

The second year of Tsang's married life had hardly begun when his beautiful wife was bitten by a yellow viper while gathering healing herbs down in the valley. When they found the poor creature she was dying. This calamity the bereaved husband regarded as a direct visitation of the clay gods in the corner; only the day before had he robbed a hunter of his rifle, leaving the poor fellow to make his way unarmed down to the sea, where he ran upon a pair of vicious species of Malay chimpanzee, in fleeing from which he fell over the cliff and was dashed to pieces. And Punda-Tsang always felt that that yellow viper was sent direct from the land of judging gods to avenge the blood of the poor hunter.

But there was one thing that mitigated the harshness of this vengeance—the presence of the little baby girl, whom he tenderly cherished, and whom he called Iali, which is to say "forgiven." But even were not the little creature a messenger of forgiveness to the penitent savage heart, she was more than worthy of his worship and love.

This child of the tropic forest was restless and agile as a young panther, with lustrous black eyes, and a wild, wayward nature, much spoilt by the wayfarers and fawned upon by the coolies that swarmed about the compound.

One day two British naval officers stopped at the Dak on their way down from a hunt in the hill country. We were seated under the palms before the bungalow after tiffin, smoking cheroots, while I listened to their exploits with interest.

Suddenly four native Malays approached, wheeling a live tiger in a clumsey wooden cage, and halted before the Dak. They were going to dispose of him to a naturalist down on the coast, who had a method of killing and stuffing animals by which the marvellous lustre of their skins was preserved.

The animal was certainly a magnificent specimen. If you have never seen a live tiger fresh from the jungle, take my word for it, the ordinary caged tiger at shows is as much like the former as tinned strawberries are like the fresh, lustrous fruit of June or July. The officers thought so, too, as they decided to buy him, and take him home for presentation to the Zoo.

They bought the animal, set the natives' hearts rejoicing, and started down the coast, while Punda-Tsang, not content with exacting fifty per cent. commission from the poor fellows for using his Dak for a tiger mart, committed the meanest act of his life.

He slyly sawed one of the cage bars nearly through in four places. Then he went to work, planning to waylay the tiger on his way back to his haunts after he had broken loose, which he knew would happen before the officers could get many miles down the valley.

He quietly pursued his planning until late at night, when he heard upon good authority that the tiger had broken his cage and nearly killed one of his owners. Then he prepared to put his plans into action.

Here we reach the illustration of the first-mentioned fact, of which Tsang was ready to take advantage; that the Malay tiger is no gentleman. He knew that the beast will never walk up leisurely and take his bite, but that the very moment he smells blood he will drop flat, and, even if the feast is a mile away, will begin a slow, creeping journey towards it, wasting hours, perhaps, and working up a terrific hunger in the meantime.

When he has approached within twenty feet of the prize, quivering with desire and terrible with greed, he will leap into the air like a cannon-ball and plunge down upon his victim.

Punda-Tsang knew all this, so he dug a pit down in the valley, constructed a network of branches over it, and laid a quarter of a bullock upon it. Then he waited for the tiger to scent the blood and make his slow, crawling journey, knowing that when he had made the grand twenty-foot leap he would go crashing through the network into the pit below.

Then Tsang planned he would starve the beast, let down a cage baited with more fresh meat, and, sliding the bars from above, haul the captured tiger out and sell him over again. All of this might have happened, but it didn't. Events somewhat strange and more terrible for Punda-Tsang intervened, and upset his arrangements.

As little Iali was the innkeeper's constant solace and companion, she went with him to the pit-digging, her father explained to her the manner of capturing the "four-footed jungle-god."

With the appearance of the new moon, that mascot of the Orientals, the pit was baited. For two days nothing was heard of the tiger, and Punda-Tsang began to

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fear that he had gone back to the hills by another route.

On the afternoon of the third day I sat on the cliff's edge, watching the mists rise from the roaring river bottom, a phenomenon which always accompanies the closing day. Suddenly there was a shuffling of sandals about the compound, and I knew that something extraordinary was taking place. I turned quickly, the big form of Punda-Tsang, the innkeeper, burst upon me suddenly, his flat face as pallid as a demon's, ferocious, but with the ferocity of nameless fear.

"Iali!" he cried hoarsely. 'Have you seen Iali?"

"No!" I replied, almost in a whisper.

He did not wait, but sped towards the so-called bullock-sheds, which were really caves cut in the solid rock beyond the Dak. I had become attached to the child, whose wonderful beauty had charmed, and whose weird ways mystified me. But I had never been alone with her, knowing that any accident happening to Iali while in my keeping would result seriously to me—perhaps cost me my life.

The coolies were flying hither and thither, making the air ring with their loud wails. Such agitation on the part of these vagabonds roused me to the realisation of the child's danger. Suddenly I turned my eyes and thoughts in the direction of the ravine where the tiger trap lay. I recalled vividly the child's interest in the "jungle-god," who was to be captured in the deep pit, and, knowing the little creature's absolute fearlessness, thought that, acting upon some childish impulse, she might have strayed down the narrow path to the pit.

I dropped over the ledge, soon reaching the pathway by a short cut. As I penetrated the jungle, now suffused with mist in the ruby glow of the perspiring day, I realised with what risk to myself I was entering this dangerous spot, all unarmed.

I was still debating whether or not to return for a weapon of defence when, as I leapt over a soft spot in the soft clay, I saw two footprints that struck terror into my heart; one was that of a tiger, the other belonged to a little child.

I dropped down beside them. No; there was no mistaking them, so clear and fresh were both. I rose to my feet, my head whirling, my ears half deafened by the noise of the jungle insects and the increasing roar of that river beyond. Then I crept forward, scarcely daring to breathe, my heart beating faster and faster with apprehension.

The distance to that tiger-pit seemed to be doubled, and the time that elapsed before reaching it everlasting. The crackling of the leaves and twigs on the moss beneath my feet added to my trepidation. Almost before I realised it I had reached the big trap, and then I stopped short, thrilled by a sound.

I looked up. Through the deepening mists and intervening boughs I saw the little child-figure of Iali creeping out upon the withered branches over the pit.

For an instant I had no power to move, or dare I speak lest, overcome by sudden fright, the frail little one might lose her foothold. Suddenly a new horror disclosed itself. What were those two glaring, cold, yet fiery points just beyond the pit, burning their way through the shadows?

Heavens! It was the tiger! He was lying flat on the ground, couchant, paws extended, quivering, ready for the fatal spring!

In moments like these one's reasoning powers become superhuman. I saw that in all probability either Iali or I was to be sacrificed, which one depended merely upon the caprice of the wild beast. I had heard that the calm, steady, fearless stare of a human being is more terrifying to wild animals than guns that kill. On the instant I resolved to practise it; it was my only expedient. So I stared at those two coldly bright and glowing points of light like a madman, without a quiver, without a doubt.

Suddenly I saw the little figure waver on the dead branches over the mouth of the pit, and then—oh, horrors! With a weak cry poor little Iali lost her foothold and slipped through the yielding boughs into the cave beneath.

For a moment all was silent. Then I heard her childish prattle. The soft sand had broken Iali's fall, and saved her life, while I was brought face to face with the most awful problem of my life.

For hours, as it seemed, I stood like a pillar of stone, the sweat pouring down my neck, my tongue hot and parched. One show of fear would, I knew, be fatal. The "jungle-gods" are keen, like demons, measuring strength with man. How long could I keep up this maddening strain? How long could I force upon this beast the illusion of my superior will?

All at once, as I stood like one in a trance, facing this growing problem, I was conscious of a stir in the reeds and underbush at my right hand. Though the sound caused me to tremble, I dare not take eyes from the crouching monster beyond.

The next instant, a strange huge shape crept stealthily out of the underwood, and advanced into the clearing toward the pit—a ponderous black monster with the body of a beast, but lifting through the grass the head and shoulders of a human colossus. It was an enormous ourang-outang.

The tiger crouched lower. He seemed to be nonplussed, as stunned by the intrusion of this huge interloper as I was. In silence he transferred his burning gaze to the ourang-outang.

Advancing to the very edge of the pit, the huge ape slipped, but he recovered. Sly beast! He saw that the branches were only a blind. Then he walked round the edge of the trap, and knelt down like a human being, slowly, deliberately reaching out his long hairy arm till his giant hand clutched that bullock bone.

Oh, what joy that calm, providential deed brought to my heart!

Then, to my intense relief, the ourang-outang slowly dragged the great mass of flesh off the network of the branches to the solid ground.

For a moment longer the gleam of those two terrible eyes followed the unsuspecting pilferer. Then came a rustle, a strange shriek like sudden thunder, a bound, and a roar, and the "jungle-god" had sprung into the air, and came down like a flashing avalanche full upon the broad body of the kneeling ape. A single paw struck the huge creature in the small of the back, and never shall I forget the sound of that blow, which broke the bones of the victim's spine like a cannon ball.

With an almost human groan, the preserver of my life, and of hers whom I came to save, gave up the booty, together with his own life. Then the tiger, with a final flash of the eyes full into my own, snatched up the meat in his jaws, and glided off into the thick of the jungle.

I have often wondered since how things would have turned out if that tiger had been a gentleman.

GEORGE DRUMMOND.

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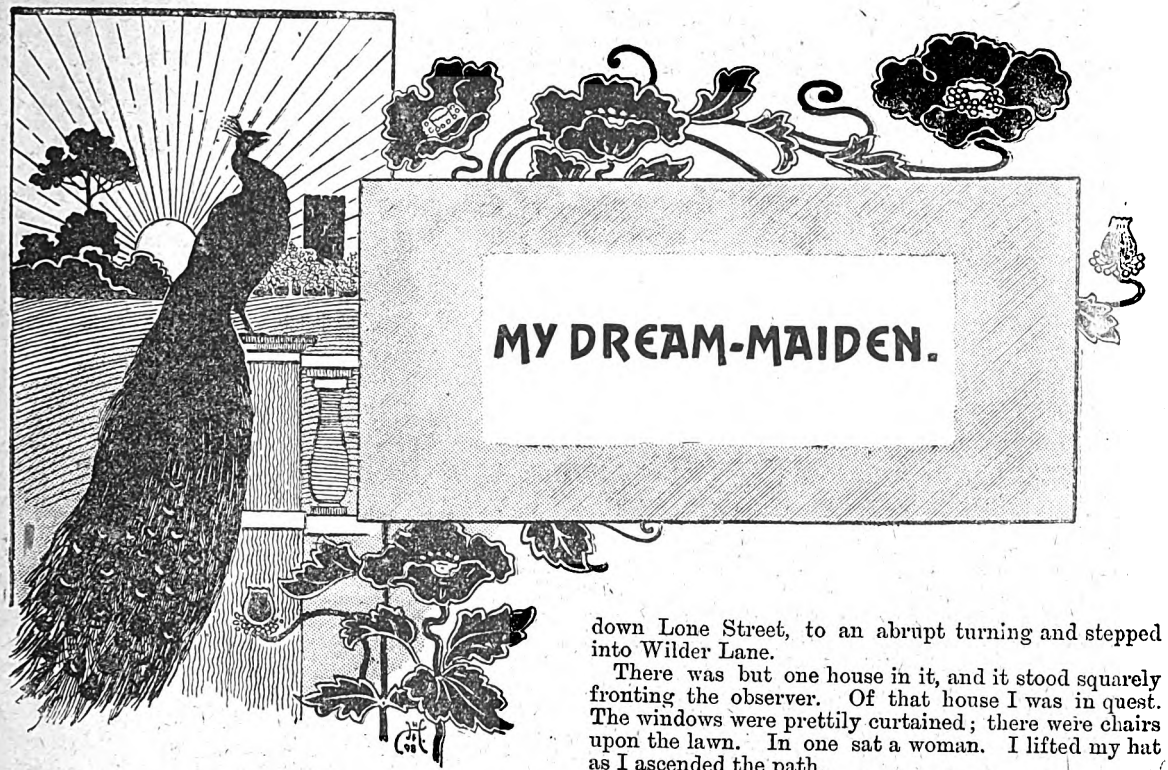

MY DREAM-MAIDEN.

I WAS disgusted with boarding houses; I could not afford to live at an hotel; I was engaged upon some literary work, and the atmosphere of the boarding house, where I had a particular peg on the hat-rack, and a particular girl to "make eyes" at me, was not a favourable atmosphere in which to condense in an attractive form the ideas and fancies that chased each other through my brain.

Seated one night at my window, looking through the evening newspaper—it was early spring and the days were lengthening—I seemed irresistibly drawn to the column devoted to advertisements for the sale of real estate. This was queer, for I had no interest in real estate, but, yielding to the impulse, I read every advertisement. Such splendid bargains; such glorious attractions! Yet, strange to say, in the whole lot there was but one that appealed to me. It was this:

FOR sale, a small house in quiet neighbourhood in good repair and comfortably furnished. Apply to Walker & Co., 7 Elm Street.

I read this through three times. I cut it out.

Visions of a home of my very own; an undisturbed retreat into which I could retire and remain until my work was finished, ran riot through my brain. I could read no more in the paper. I paced up and down the room and keeping pace with my steps were the words, "For sale, a small house in a quiet neighbourhood, in good repair and comfortably furnished." I tried to think of something else. It was of no use. I went to bed and lay awake thinking.

It was morning. I was a little way out in the country, far enough out to see the trees putting on their tender robes of green, to hear the birds and the running waters. I looked up and saw the sign, "Lone Street." I passed down Lone Street, to an abrupt turning and stepped into Wilder Lane.

There was but one house in it, and it stood squarely fronting the observer. Of that house I was in quest. The windows were prettily curtained; there were chairs upon the lawn. In one sat a woman. I lifted my hat as I ascended the path.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "I thought the house was unoccupied. I have the key."

"It is unoccupied," the woman said, still sitting in the chair.

I noticed that she was small, almost childish in build. A heavy mass of dark hair framed an oval face, thoughtful, intelligent, serious. The eyebrows were arched, the eyes a greenish-grey. The nose straight and slender, the mouth firm, with a dimple in one corner and a pitiful droop in the other, as if Fate had not dealt altogether kindly with her.

"And you?" I queried.

"Don't mind me. You will get used to me. I shall sit in this chair as I have sat night after night waiting—waiting for someone who never comes. I shall sit at the table. I shall sit at the window. I shall lie on the bed. I shall run up and down the stairs. I shall sing sometimes, I shall write and write and write. Do you have fancies? Sit down and talk with me."

I sat down. I could not take my eyes off the woman's face. She was singularly fascinating to me. I forgot my errand. I only knew that when I turned the corner of Lone Street into Wilder Lane, I had left discontent behind me. Here on the verandah with this woman of whose existence I knew nothing an hour before, I felt uplifted, mentally and spiritually. Life was indeed worth living—of which at times I had entertained doubts.

We talked. I cannot remember all we said. We talked like people who have known each other for years: who trust each other. I revelled in the interchange of thought; my life had been so solitary. I reached out my hand to clasp hers, which rested on the arm of the chair; a tiny hand with long fingers, unringed. I dropped the key. It fell with a tinkling sound. I started—

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"You never slept so sound before," said my landlady.

The sun was streaming into the window of my room. There was the unmistakable odour of a boiled dinner in the process of construction.

"For sale, a small house, in a quiet neighbourhood." Of course I went there after my dream. I had had many strange dreams in my lifetime, but I could not recollect so impressive a vision as that of the house and the woman in Wilder Lane.

"I am sorry," said the suave Mr. Walker, of Walker & Co., "that I cannot take you out there in my carriage. I am alone to-day and tied down here."

"I can find it," I replied, with an inward rejoicing that the voluble agent could not accompany me. My dream was hanging over me, not disagreeably. I felt certain that I should have some adventure.

It was a beautiful morning. The buds were swelling on the trees; the air was mild; the sky a soft blue with fleecy clouds floating in its cerulean depths. I found Lone Street without difficulty. It seemed very familiar. I had purposely refrained from making any inquiries regarding the history or ownership of the house I was seeking.

At the end of Lone Street there was an abrupt turn, facing me was the house of my sleeping vision! I fully expected to see the woman of my dream sitting there near the front door. I was woefully disappointed, yet there was an air of occupancy about the place, and I foolishly imagined that she had gone inside for a moment. I waited expectantly, idly swinging the key.

I waited five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, then I went slowly up the path and rang the bell. With the impression strong upon me that there was someone inside the house, I dared not turn the key in the lock and enter. I could swear that I heard steps upon the stairs. Imagination plays strange freaks at times. I was wrong.

With the feeling that I was an intruder, a housebreaker, I turned the key with a trembling hand and looked in. I listened for a challenge from the inside; none came. I entered, shutting the door behind me, and found myself in a small hall, at the foot of a straight flight of stairs.

Still feeling an intruder, I went cautiously about, peering into every room before I entered it. I had never been in a house with such a look of homeliness, such cosy comfort, such a pure, sweet atmosphere as here! It was simply but tastefully furnished. The windows were open in every room. I never saw a house with so many windows. Windows in the halls, on the staircases; windows opening into tiny balconies, just large enough for two.

My progress through the house was slow, for I expected every minute to hear some one cry "Halt!" I expected—I hoped most earnestly—to see the dream-maiden. I lingered and listened. A door closed. I leant over the staircase, and I saw nothing; the wind was teasing me.

Having no reasonable excuse for remaining longer, and fully satisfied in my mind that I should return, I left the house reluctantly. Right round the corner in Lone Street a woman stood at the gate. A tall, gaunt woman, large-boned, and plain-featured.

"You have been to inspect the Wilder Lane house?" she asked.

"Yes; and you?—do you own it?"

She laughed. "No; I am the caretaker. I live here. Every day I must do the housekeeping there as if the house were occupied. I shall be glad when someone moves in. Have you a family?"

"No. To tell the truth, I had not thought of the housekeeping. It has to be done; it is one of the necessary evils of life. Could you do it—do it just the same as you do now? It seems so sweet and wholesome there. It seems like home. I never had a real *bonâ fide* home; mine have all been shams, make-believes."

"I would do it," she interrupted. "Have you bought it?"

"Bought it! I have not even talked with the agent about it. Do you know its history?" said I; "every house has a history."

"Yes, I—"

"Don't tell me! Don't ever tell me. You may think it strange, but to me a house has individuality. I respect its past life. If it is best for me to know its history it will be revealed to me."

The tall, gaunt woman looked at me curiously, but said nothing. In her mind I was not quite all there, I felt certain.

May Day found me installed in the house as owner. My arrangements for housekeeping were delightful. The tall, gaunt woman was to do all that was possible of my work in her own house; my washing and ironing were to be done at her home; my food cooked there, but it was to be served in my cosy dining room. Never was a man so favoured; a home without its disagreeable features.

I chose for my chamber the room that had the most masculine air about it. The furniture was solid and substantial.

There was a small writing desk by the window; there were no lace curtains, no feminine needle-work to fuss over, and get angry about. A couch with a dark covering had but one sofa pillow upon it; the pillow was dark also. The pictures upon the walls were such as a man would fancy and admire.

Across the passage from my chamber was a dainty woman's boudoir. The furniture was light and pretty. There was a desk here, but it was a small affair; there was no key in the lock. It did not matter. I could not, and would not open it, had I the means, for on the threshold of this chamber I had paused and wondered if it would be right to intrude.

All day I had felt as if someone were with me; still more I became possessed of the idea as I entered the room. What spirit haunted this house? Who had dwelt therein?

The pictures in this chamber were of noble-looking men, saints and martyrs. There was one large engraving: a great stretch of waters, angry waves dashing against a rock; sitting thereon was a woman, her hair disordered by the wind and spray; one hand held a cloak tightly round her, like a shield from the storm; the other was stretched out, the slender fingers beckoning. I could see nothing to respond. It was a sad picture, and the woman portrayed therein seemed like the dream-woman. So strong was the resemblance, that I wondered what the witchery was that made this face so attractive a one. It was the soul that my eyes divined, and to which my soul answered. With a deep sense of peace, I fastened all the doors and windows below stairs and sought my chamber and rest.

"Come!"

I started. I had not seen her enter. It was indeed the dream-maiden calling me. Standing in the doorway, she looked placidly into my chamber. I felt no embarrassment as I arose, and followed her from the room.

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She led the way down the stairs and into the tiny dining room. We breakfasted. Sitting opposite me, she poured the coffee and sweetened it with a glance that made the blood run warm through my veins.

"This is comfort," she said, and added gravely. "I have waited for you many years."

"Had I known," said I, "I would have come long ago. I have just begun to live. Will it last? It seems too good to be true."

"Will it last! Does anything last! Oh, the long, long years; the secret longings; the few joys, and the many sorrows! I love you."

"Then, indeed, have I entered my kingdom!" I pushed my chair back hastily; I ran towards her. She looked in my eyes, I was about to clasp her in my arms—oh, Heaven! It was night, darkness. I was alone. This had been but a tantalising dream.

I never slept but that she came to me. So real she seemed, so real our conversations, that I sketched her as the heroine of my novel. The book won fame and money for me.

One day, seated at my desk, I pulled out a hitherto unused drawer. Something rattled in it. I put my hand in and drew out a package wrapped in tissue paper. It was a old-fashioned gold locket. Inside (I could scarcely believe my eyes) was the face of the dream-maiden, my night companion.

The face was as I had seen it a hundred times. What mystery was this? Here indeed was something tangible, something real; there must be such a woman somewhere in real flesh and blood. I must find her. Why had she not sought me after reading my novel? Why did she not reveal herself and not torture me longer? What was this kinship of souls, this intensity of feeling that held this woman and myself by a tie akin to spiritual communion?

I went to her chamber. I sought frantically for other clues to her indentity. At last I sought a key to fit the lock of her desk. Surely it would not be sacrilege to touch her most precious belongings, our lives had been so peculiarly asssociated.

Within the desk I found poems, unfinished novels, essays, small and clever sketches. Writer and artist, she was doubly talented. I eagerly scanned them all. All were strong and vigorous, but most of them too sad to please the general reader or picture-lover. To me they were a revelation of the life, and heart, and soul, of the only woman in the world that I loved, the only woman who could satisfy my cravings.

"Yes, I know the former owner of the house," said Mr. Walker blandly. "Let—me—see! She lives in Antwerp Street now, No. 13."

"Antwerp Street?" I repeated. "Isn't that a poor locality?"

"A poor place, yes. She lost what little money she had. Her name is Belmont, Desirée Belmont. I always thought it such an old name."

Now I know. In an hour, if Fate were kind, I should be in the presence of the dream-maiden, a dream-maiden no longer. Desirée Belmont, my heart's desire! I threaded my way down the narrow dirty street with a heartache at the thought that she, my dainty sweetheart, lived in so foul and unwholesome a place. I had no idea what I should say. I only knew that I should force her to return to her former home, and I—would go back to lodgings until what I hoped for came to pass.

How wildly and boldly we plunge into the future!

No. 13. Would she answer my ring? I, a strong man, was trembling with excitement. I listened; a slow step echoed from the passage-way, a feeble hand turned the knob. An old lady stood before me; a beautiful old lady with a look like *her* in the eyes.

"Miss Désirée Belmont? Yes; will you step in?" I followed her through the passage into a tiny room.

"Be seated, sir," she said, with a quaint old-fashioned dignity. "It is a long time since an inquiry has been made for Désirée Belmont."

"Surely she is alive, and here," I interrupted excitedly. "I must see her. I can help her, and she can help me."

"Help you, a strong man like you!" said the old lady sadly. "The time was," here a blush reddened her brown skin, "when Désirée Belmont could have been of service to you or anyone. It is past."

"Tell me—tell me at once! Is she not living?"

"Living, yes; I am Desirée Belmont."

"You, you! There is some mistake. There must be a young woman of the same name. Little Désirée! Your niece, perhaps."

"Let us understand each other. I have no niece; I know no other Désiree Belmont"

"Did you ever live in Wilder Lane?"

"Oh, my home, my pretty home!" said the old lady with tear drops slowly trickling down her cheeks. "Tell me about it. Tell me who lives there now. Strange stranger," looking at me earnestly. "I have seen you somewhere—where?"

"Where? Goodness knows!" I exclaimed. "Have you ever seen this locket?"

She clutched it from my hand and looked eagerly at the face of the dream-maiden.

"Yes, yes, that is I—I, when I lived in Wilder Lane. Did you find anything else? I wrote a lot in those days. I was an imaginative girl. Poverty has taken all the imagination out of me. I'm almost worn out, sir; almost."

"How long ago was this? Am I dreaming? Is there no young Desirée Belmont?"

"There was one once," she answered sadly. "I have haunted that house in Wilder Lane ever since I left it in my womanhood. It has been vacant so many years. I paid for perpetual care as one pays for a plot in a cemetery. I was quite happy there, really happy when I forgot myself in my fancies. I loved that house. Every night, almost, I am a girl again. I go back there. I see—yes, I have seen you in a dream! If I had ever married the man I loved, you might have been my son."

I was bewildered. My dream had been shattered, but surely Fate had drawn me there for something.

"Your son," I said, rising and standing over her, pressing back the hair from her forehead tenderly. "Your son I will be. Tell me the name of the man you did not marry."

"Edward Gordon."

"My father! My miserable father! This is a miracle, after all these years. You knew of his death, and of hers—my mother?"

"He died first," said the old lady. "If he had lived, I might have been your second mother, and lived there with you."

I settled her affairs where she was, and took her home with me. Should you pass the house in summer time, you will see her seated in the front garden.

EDGAR GREENE.

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BOOK II.—CONCERNING THE - - VOYAGE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty. They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

The cutter is run down in a fog by a British privateer, giving the fugitives only just time to escape on to the larger vessel as their own goes to the bottom.

The Governor of Lima observes a strange craft cruising in his waters, and orders it to take its departure. The crew defy him, however, and he sends the *Santa Thérèsa* to punish them for their impudence. Unfortunately for him his own men get the worst of it, and Sneyd, attended by Sandy Carmichael, lands and interviews the Governor, demanding an enormous sum as compensation money. This His Excellency reluctantly agrees to pay.

The *Fortune's Favourite*, the snow which rescued our three heroes from a watery grave, to all appearances a simple trader, proved to be an armed adventurer. After cruising about on the Spanish Main, and accumulating much treasure, the captain decides to return home. Before doing so, he dispatches a part of his ship's company, including Sneyd, Carmichael, and O'Neill on a prize vessel in search of fresh adventure.

CHAPTER III. (*continued*).

Two days after the bowsprit began to head towards the south, Gauntlett, who was leaning over the weather bulwark aft, uttered an exclamation, and gave hurried orders to have the vessel hove-to. She lay head to wind, with heavily slatting canvas, and the watch below somewhat naturally came up on deck to see what was to do.

"Ambergrease!" exclaimed the captain, pointing to three lumps of bright greyish matter, which every now and again appeared on the crest of a swell, some half-cable's length away on the quarter. "There's value there equal to 'arf the dollars we've got below. Away aloft there, some o' ye, and rig tackles to get the jolly-boat into the water. There's the ladies o' the court, and them as loves parfumes, 'll give more'n its weight in gould fer this ambergrease."

The little boat was lifted from its chocks amidship, swung over the side, and splashed into the water. O'Neill lowered himself down and took the sculls. Sneyd sat in the stern-sheets. "Here, Doctor," said Gauntlett, "you've delicate fingers, do you go too, and pick up every bit you can see, though it be no larger than a groat piece." So Sandy Carmichael got into the boat, which rowed off, leaving the bulwark rail of the schooner lined with bearded faces, all agog with curiosity.

O'Neill rowed on with lusty strokes, and Sneyd was soon able to pick up the first piece of ambergris, a lump weighing some five and a half or six pounds. It was solid, opaque, and of a bright grey colour, intermixed with reddish striae. It was sufficiently soft to yield under the fingers like stiff putty, and when pressed it exhaled a most delicious odour.

"More plazing job to the nose this, yer honour, than steeping flax," remarked O'Neill. "And it's meself that knows what a flax-pit sniffs like when they're takin' out the stuff."

"I don't know what steeped flax smells like," said Sneyd, "but I don't wonder at people who can afford luxuries, paying fabulous prices for a substance which emits an odour so heavenly as this."

It was uncommon to find this precious grey substance in any quantity, and consequently Captain Gauntlett did not think it worth while to lower either of his larger boats to aid in the collection. And those in the jolly-boat were quite of the same opinion. They thought that every next half-dozen strokes would bring them to the end of the store. The fragments were getting smaller, certainly. None were larger than a clenched hand. Many were as tiny as hazel nuts. But all were worth collecting. And wishing to take full advantage of an opportunity which might not occur again in the lifetime of any of them, they gleaned the sea with abundant care, and did not miss a fragment that their eyes fell upon.

So fully were they taken up by the excitement of their employment that time had passed by unnoticed, and it was not till the boom of a gun reached them across the water, that they unwrapped themselves from their enthralling pursuit, and lifted their eyes from the ocean surface in their own immediate neighbourhood. But at the signal, which was evidently intended to attract their attention, they looked up, and found that, what with their own rowing and the schooner's drift, at least six long sea miles separated them.

"The schooner's hull-down," said Sneyd, with some uneasiness.

"And taking in canvas, an' makin' things snug generally," added O'Neill.

"There goes another gun," remarked Sandy, who had noted the flash and the smoke; and, sure enough, a minute afterwards the sound boomed sullenly across the swell to their ears.

"Well," said Sneyd, "we'll obey orders and turn back, especially as I don't think there's much more of this grey stuff to collect. But I do wonder what has turned up to

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make the skipper call us back in that peremptory fashion. Two guns! It must be something pretty serious. He's not the man to blow away blank cartridge for nothing."

"It's dirthy weather, yer honour, that's what the skipper's making all snug for. See, his maintopmast's sthruck, an' that's the foret'gallant-yard they're afther lowerin' on deck this minute. See now, if yez give me one of the oars, and stick to the other yerself, it's there we'll be in half no time. Sandy, do you ship the rudder, and don't let us row round more corners than's needful."

They bent to their oars, and shoved the tubby little boat through the water with all the speed she was capable of.

Meanwhile, the sky to windward was darkening rapidly with heavy masses of black cloud, which sprung up from under the horizon, and spread rapidly over the hitherto blue heavens. The sun grew lurid, red, angry; and at last it was blotted completely from sight. A deep twilight fell over the ocean, and the breeze died away completely. The air was stifling hot; and although lightly clad, the two rowers were almost choked with their exertions. Yet they worked like horses, and tugged at their oars with the desperate energy of men who knew what they had to expect if they did not regain their ship in time.

The moan of the storm began to reach them over the waters, and herald its coming.

Sandy sat in the stern, tiller in hand, steering carefully. Every inch of way was important, and he didn't intend to deviate a hand's-breadth from the straight course, if careful steering could do it. The rowers glanced at his still set face every now and again, but they could learn nothing from it. Sandy's countenance, from the early training of that man Duncan Carmichael, was never particularly indicative of his feelings; and when at all excited, it was more wooden and expressionless than ever.

The noise of the gale grew louder as the wind-storm approached; and presently, after a few sharp squalls, the hurricane burst upon them with its full strength.

By a rapid glance over his shoulder, O'Neill saw that the schooner was in the thick of it, more than a mile away from them; and that they had no more chance of reaching her then, than of climbing to the moon. Indeed, there was little prospect of anything except swamping before them. But he was a brave man—brave as his companions were brave—and he did not intend to die without an effort. So, tossing his oar into the after rowlock, he bade Sneyd take the pair and keep the boat head to wind as well as he could, with Sandy's help. Of course, she was drifting away before the constant succession of terrific squalls that swept down on her, but that did not matter much so long as she did not meet the wind with her broadside, and get blown bodily over.

Beyond the ordinary swell, there was not much sea on as yet. The wind and the rain kept it from rising with much rapidity. But all hands knew that there would be heavy waves running before long; and from them would come the greatest danger. The cockle-shell of a boat might, by dint of severe exertion, be kept head on to them, but their breaking crests would inevitably swamp her. O'Neill was working to prevent this. By a happy streak of providence, there was a coil of good inch and a half manilla lying in the bow. Tossing the precious store of ambergris into the seething waters alongside with as little compunction as though it had been shingle ballast, the Irishman got up the floor gratings of the boat, her mast, and tiny lug-sail, and lashing them into a secure raft, bent on one end of his manilla warp and launched it overboard. Being almost flush with the water, it offered little or no resistance to the gale, and so stayed stationary, whilst the boat drifted rapidly to leeward. Yard after yard of the manilla hissed over the bow, and when as near as he could guess eighteen fathoms had run out, O'Neill checked it, and made fast on board to the foremost thwart.

"There goes another gun," remarked Sandy.

The sea was rising rapidly now, and the spindrift from the top of the waves was cutting like sleet through the air, but the boat felt the drag on her, and ran up and down the liquid hills and valleys squarely and accurately. Sneyd had unshipped his sculls as soon as the floating anchor had got the little craft in check, and was sitting down on the bottom boards aft along with his companions.

They did not speak to one another. A shout would not have made itself heard; and although they might have interchanged ideas by means of signs, neither had much to say to the others. Theirs was an almost hopeless look-out. They had seen the schooner run past them under bare poles, in the first squall, her people looking at the tiny boat helplessly, hopelessly. And when the vessel shot away into the storm-wrack, they knew they might never expect to see her again. Even supposing both were afloat and undamaged when the weather moderated, as it was bound to do sooner or later, what hope was there of coming together again?

And, moreover, they need not reckon upon being picked up by other craft. The South Pacific is a tolerable desert

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even to-day; but then, there was not one vessel on it for five hundred one would find now, and they would be far away from the track of even these scanty few.

But still, absolutely helpless as their case appeared to be so far as human judgment could discern, none of the three was of that breed which gives in till the bitter end. A weak mind might have said, "I am born to die, why prolong an easy death into a death of agony?" and, going forward, cut the warp and have been comfortably drowned in less than a couple of minutes. A Spaniard would have occupied his time in calling vigorously to the saints who would probably neglect his petition, and give him no help. A Turk would have said "Kismet," and have bothered his head about no matters sublunary or otherwise any further. But these three Britons had no notion of throwing up the sponge till they were forced to.

The jolly-boat was a heavy, clumsy, apple-bowed little structure, very different from even the North Sea trawler's punt of to-day—and that is the most solidly built craft I can think of. But although she was not good for racing purposes, she was well adapted to the use her builder intended her for—namely, to live in a heavy sea. A smart yacht's boat of similar capacity would have been swamped in ten minutes with the sea running as nastily as it was then; if, indeed, she had not collapsed into primitive staves before that time. But this bluff-bowed little tub of the last century rode out the blow with comparative ease. She wasn't dry by any means. Nothing could have been, with such a tearing pother of broken water about. But she never shipped anything green, and the white wave-tops that splashed hungrily over her stout sides were quickly hove overboard again to the place whence they came.

Sandy sat on the stern thwart with a shrunken hand on the tiller.

The sea-anchor was certainly a great help. A huge green curling wave would swoop up, with its bending crest already whitening. If that were unchecked, it would sprawl over the boat and send her down without further ado. But when such a roller reached these spars and sails and gratings, it had to break willy-nilly, and its shattered fragments would sweep shrieking on, and the little boat would wriggle over the yeasty *débris*, and take scarcely so much as a bucketful on board.

Through half the night did the hurricane rage with unabated fury; and then the wind dropped almost as suddenly as it had arisen.

There was still, of course, a heavy sea running. But from long oily swells such as these were, the boat need fear no danger; and, worn out by what they had gone through, the three occupants one by one nodded off, and fell asleep.

When they woke up the sun was just past meridian, and baking hot. There was no cloud in the sky, but a gentle breeze from the eastward ruffled the surface of the heavy swells which were sweeping up with monotonous regularity.

All were suffering acutely from thirst already, all were stiff and cramped from lying in the boat, all awoke unrefreshed; but each bore his discomfort without complaint.

Sneyd was the first to speak. "We must stand in towards the coast," he said, as cheerfully as if they'd but an easy half-hour's sail before them. "See if there's a compass in the after-locker, Sandy. There was one on board the day before yesterday, for I saw it myself."

Sandy reported the compass on board and uninjured, and the other two busied themselves with heaving up the sea-anchor, unlashing the heterogeneous collection of which it was composed, and getting each item on board and stowed in its place. Then the mast was stepped, and the sail, a standing lug, run up and sheeted flat home, for the very wind was against them, and beating in so light a breeze would practically be useless. Their flat-bottomed, round-bowed little tub would make far more leeway than she would gain in the other direction, and they might quite as well, if not better, have remained at their sea-anchor.

Each knew this, but each was anxious to be rid of the maddening sense of inaction. Energetic, all three, by nature, the idea of sitting still, waiting for death, was more than they could endure. Far better make a struggle for it, even though that struggle was obviously useless.

So the boat was close-hauled as near as she would go, and, taking it in turns to steer, they sent her slowly and slantwise over the rollers, on a course which would have brought them to somewhere or other on the Californian coast, if it had been persisted in long enough. Of course, they had no intention to journey that far. This was only the first board of a series of tacks which was to bring them to the nearest land of South America. They even kept up the farce by beginning to discuss what they should do when they landed, how the Spaniards would treat them, and how they should behave towards the Spaniards. But this effort at cheerfulness failed. One by one they dropped out of the conversation. Their mouths were dry and parched. Their aching tongues had swollen up to double the normal size, and were covered with a dark and gluey fur.

Keeping their clothes moist with sea-water afforded some relief; for the moisture creeps in through the pores of the skin; but it did not assuage the intense longing for drink.

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In the night it rained.

Fearful lest the shower might be short, they greedily sucked the first drops as they fell on their brine-encrusted clothes; and then caught more in their hats, and drank out of them delicious draughts that seemed of nectar. Then the rain downpoured with tropical violence, and by spreading out the sail across the thwarts they collected a couple of quarts. For want of a better vessel to stow it in, this precious fluid was run into the wooden baler; and, in order to keep this from spilling, one or other of them had to sit with it between his hands, and watch every movement of the boat with jealous care. Their hats were, all three of them, leaky and porous, and so unsuited for reservoirs. But they answered for drinking vessels, and, before the rain ceased, they had each of them imbibed as much water as he could hold.

This liquid meal rendered the pangs of hunger, which were beginning to make themselves very painful, less acute; but it did not remove them. The three poor fellows felt faint and weak. To stand up was to be overcome with dizziness. Lying down was the only position approaching ease. He who had charge of the precious wooden baler was thoroughly exhausted with his efforts at the end of an hour's spell.

Another day dragged itself through, and another night, and again they found themselves without water. The fierce sun had robbed them of much of their little store and, despite the jealous care of him who handled it, a drop would occasionally splash over the side of the wooden vessel, and be lost irretrievably. It yielded little more than a mouthful apiece, and what was that in such a climate?

On the morning of the third day the two elders were lying helplessly on the floor gratings. The ex-cornet of horse was worst. He was almost unconscious.

Sandy, although the youngest, seemed to bear up best under the trial. The hard usage of his younger days had done him this service at any rate, though it is to be doubted whether Duncan Carmichael had any such end in view when he applied his course of treatment. But the result was valuable in this time of need. Sandy sat on the stern thwart with a shrunken hand on the tiller, and a pinched face turned now to the luff of the lug-sail, and now to the ocean to windward.

He could steer by instinct, and instinct taught him to cast an occasional glance to see what the weather was going to be; and, doing these matters without trouble, he had his brain at liberty to ponder over other things.

During the first part of the day Sandy was much too tired and feeble to think much, and when the midday heat was at its highest and most cruel strength, he expected every minute to topple helplessly over like the other two in the bottom of the boat. But when the baking afternoon began to cool somewhat, Sandy began to be haunted by a vision of some strange bird-like creature that he could not understand at all.

He didn't think it was an ordinary feathered biped that was annoying him, for if it had been he would have recognised it. A great sea-fowl—an albatross, he thought it was—had been hovering near the boat all day, and it was there even then. He could make it out clearly enough—beak, pinions, everything. But still this other bird, or whatever it was, produced too blurred an image on his retina to produce any definite impression.

"My brain must be going," he told himself. "That book of Dr. Menteith's, 'Ye Illusions offe ye Dying,' mentioned it as a symptom of those who perish from hunger and thirst."

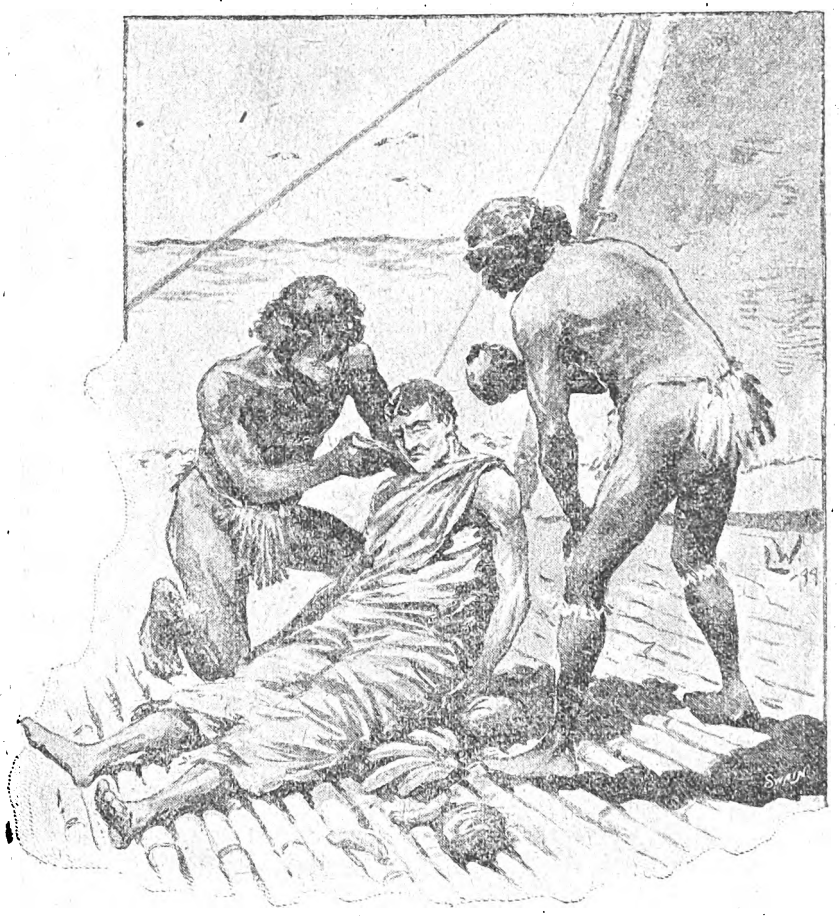
He passed a hand wearily across his eyes, and looked about him again. There, overhead, was the great sea-fowl, grimly waiting till his meal should be ready. There, in the boat's wake, was a black triangle, like a tiny lateen sail, which never deviated from its relative position. But Sandy took very little notice of either fowl or fish. That

Mytto shaded his eyes with a hand, and gazed afresh.

they were waiting to make a meal of his carcase troubled him little just then. It was the strange thing ahead that perplexed and worried him. He had always been of an inquiring turn, and his late training had brought out the latent thirst for information which lay within him. At this, one of his last moments, there was a strange living thing of some kind—he felt sure it was living—within reasonable distance, and he could neither make head nor tail of it. Presently he would die, and the chance would be lost.

It was a grotesque idea. If he did come near enough to this strange animal to classify and make notes on its peculiarities, the discoveries could not be handed along. They would die with him. But though quite aware of this, he didn't think it mattered particularly. Once he had got near enough to this strange bird—he was sure it was a bird now; he could distinguish its wings; great, grey wings—once close abreast of this bird, his curiosity would be satisfied, and he would just lie down on the grating and close his eyes.

To put the matter bluntly, Sandy had become light-headed. The two men in the bottom of the boat were by this time quite unconscious. They were lying absolutely still, with a few gallons of sea-water splashing backwards and forwards over them, and might well have been taken for dead. The steersman would not be long before he joined them. His half-crouched body was swaying with every roll of the boat. His eyes were dull and heavy. His face was terribly emaciated. His clothes hung loosely upon his



His bearers . . . . placed the shell to his lips afresh.

frame. But the shrunken hand which grasped the tiller steered as straight a course as any hand could have done, and the jolly-boat held on to one fixed point. The last remaining scraps of Sandy Carmichael's mind were guiding those skinny fingers to carry out their owner's last wish. This strange sea-fowl ahead; this bird with the great, grey wings; that was the lodestone that was drawing the hapless little boat along.

CHAPTER IV.

How the canoes sailed down from the North: how a sail was spied: and how three white men were rescued.

FROM an island which lay a hundred and twenty miles away to the north, a couple of canoes were sailing to another island, which was distant eighty miles south.

The canoes were dug-outs, hollowed by fire and rude cutting tools from the solid trunk. Each was about thirty feet long, with six feet for greatest beam. Alone, neither would have been able to stand the seas which one assuredly must meet with in so long a voyage, even in the most favourable weather. But each was made to support the other.

I mean that, by means of poles laid across the gunwales, they were lashed securely side by side, about five feet apart, so that a capsize was more or less impossible. There was a platform on the poles—a grating, one might almost call it—of bamboos; so that, if a sea was shipped, it would quickly drain away. And, furthermore, the canoes had been prepared for sea by having a good broad plank sewn on with fibre above the gunwale, so that each had, to use a technical term, abundance of free board.

A mast rose from each canoe, the two heads being joined together. In the triangle thus formed, a sail laboriously woven from coarse fibre was hoisted, and set on boom and yard.

The platform held crew and passengers. There were eighteen men of all ages. Most of them were stark naked, but some bundles of *tappa* cloth showed that during the evening chill they could clothe when they wished to. Happy mortals! clothing was to them for warmth, not decency; for, like Adam before the fall, they were naked, and not an atom ashamed. Indeed, only two of them were clad, and these more as a sign of office than for any other reason.

Their one garment consisted of a yard-wide strip of *tappa* cloth thrown over one shoulder, and wound loosely round the body.

The two men who wore these insigna were chiefs, father and son. The elder was just then sitting in the stern of the starboard canoe, steering. He had no compass before him, and, it being daylight, of course there were no stars visible; yet for all that he held on confidently enough. How he steered I cannot tell; but it is a well-known fact that the aboriginal races of the Pacific Islands were gifted with an instinct, which guided them infallibly across the great sea wastes in their frequent ocean voyages.

The younger man was pacing backwards and forwards over the heaving bamboo deck, apparently exercising himself.

Every time he came forward in his short parade, he stopped for a moment to scan the semicircle of the horizon before him, and then, turning, resumed his walk. The other men were lying and sitting about, chatting or sleeping. There was nothing for them to do.

Suddenly the elder chief spoke.

"Mytto," he said, "old eyes are better than young ones still."

"How's that, father? What do you see, that I don't."

"There, straight ahead. You've passed your eye across it at least six times since it rose above the water's edge."

With his attention thus drawn, Mytto shaded his eye with a hand, and gazed afresh.

"A white speck, father," he said. "Some seafowl, is it?"

"Too far away for that."

"Wait," said the younger man. He cast off his *tappa* robe, and seizing the mast of the weather canoe with hands and knees, swarmed nimbly aloft, and perched himself

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on the swaying yard, held on to the apex of the triangles balancing himself on his lurching perch with a true sailor's agility.

"Well?" inquired the steersman.

"It is a canoe," replied Mytto, "yet like no canoe I've ever seen before. She is all visible from here, what there is of her, and that's very little. How men dare put to sea in such a tiny cockleshell, I can't understand."

"Been fishing, perhaps, and got blown off shore," suggested one of the men.

"She's no craft of ours, of that I'm sure," continued Mytto. "Her sail, too, is different in every way—in colour, shape, and hoist—from those we know."

"What men are there on board?" inquired the older chief.

"I can't see. The sail hides them. They are a little to weather of us. But we are holding on to meet one another, and shall soon know."

The newcomer's hull was visible from the deck now, when the lashed canoes rose on the summit of a swell; and Mytto slipped down from aloft, and joined the knot of men below. All were on their feet, gazing eagerly ahead. Almost anything would have been welcome to break the monotony of their voyage.

"There's an old hand at the steering paddle," quoth one. "She's coming at us as straight as an arrow flight."

"And that's crooked if it comes from thy bow," laughed another. "But likely enough she's seen us, and so has a point to make for."

The old chief in the stern heard this last remark, and, to test its truth, bore away a point or two. In a minute the strange craft had put up her helm so as to intersect this new course.

"They have seen us, father," said Mytto.

"I know it, boy. Come now, all of you, get your weapons. 'Tis always well to take a stranger at sea for an enemy till he proves a friend. That may save a surprise."

The men got clubs and fish-bone-tipped lances from the canoes, laid them out in readiness on the deck, and then recommenced their occupation of staring at the craft ahead.

When the two vessels were about a hundred yards apart, rolling sideways over the same swell, the stranger ran slowly up into the wind, her sail flapping and tearing wildly at its sheet. There was a man in the stern, but he had fallen across the tiller, and forcing it to leeward, had brought his cock-boat up head to wind. Presently she fell off again on the other tack; but, as the sheet was made fast to windward, she made but little headway.

The lashed canoes overhauled fast. Clubs and lances were little thought of now. Three forms were visible in the stranger, and those three were to all appearances dead men. A shark was following; and sharks generally knew when they were to have a meal.

Foot by foot the canoe came up astern, and then the old chief skilfully manœuvred alongside.

Mytto sprang on board with a rope's end, which he made fast. He found halyards, which he was accustomed to, and casting them off, ran down the sail. And then he turned to the three occupants. Those lying in the wash on the floor gratings, being nearest, commanded his first attention. He examined each carefully. Both were alive. Then he passed on to the younger stranger in the stern. He was alive too. He moaned when he was touched, but seemed in a better way than his companions.

Mytto took in the situation at once. "Poor fellows, they are perished with thirst, and starving," he said.

Half-a-dozen men dived into the canoes, and half-a-dozen eager hands held forth green cocoa-nuts. Two more of the islanders boarded the boat, and they and Mytto, each taking a patient, poured the sweet juice between their parched and blackened lips, and one by one the sufferers regained conciousness.

(To be continued.)

HOW TO START - - - - - - A LIBRARY.

EVERY household in the United Kingdom worthy of the name, contains at least one book-case with an assortment of volumes, the nature of which is a pretty sure index of the character of the owner. In some cases the husband is responsible for the selection; in other cases the wife takes the initiative, and buys those novels which most takes her fancy.

A great number of men and women feel the absence of good standard works, works that they had taken down from their parents' bookshelves when they were yet unmarried, books like "Grimms' Fairy Tales," "Arabian Nights Entertainment," and "Don Quixote," books which they are always *going* to buy for their own delectation and for that of their offspring, but which they never do. There is always some new and important novel that gets the money they have decided should be spent on one or the other of these books, and so they never find a place in the bookshelf.

Then, again, the price! Works which are likely to have so much thumbing as either one of those mentioned above, must not be bound in paper covers or printed in tiny type. Yet to secure them in acceptable and durable form has hitherto been beyond the means of the ordinary man.

We say "hitherto" advisedly, for it is now possible, as the result of the arrangements which we have made with various publishers, for everyone who is in a position to pay rent for a home at all, to become (for the initial payment of ten shillings) the possessor of not only these three books, but of ninety-seven others of equal value besides!

Such an opportunity as this was never before offered to anyone, and it is only by arranging for the disposal of enormous quantities that we are enabled to supply such a number of books for so nominal a sum of money.

Bound in cloth, the hundred volumes will cost you, first of all, a ten-shilling postal order, and then a monthly payment of twenty shillings for seven months—surely an easy matter for anyone who is in a position to afford even the accommodation for one hundred books!

If you wish to clear off the whole sum at once, you may pay £7 down for those bound in cloth, while for another sixty shillings, the same volumes will be supplied in handsome half-morocco binding.

If a hundred books is beyond your means or ambition, fifty of them may be secured on conditions which appeared in last week's *P.W.*, and which will appear again shortly.

Anyway, whatever you may think for the moment regarding this manner of improving your mind and embellishing your home, I would advise you to drop a postcard to the 100 BEST BOOKS DEPARTMENT, asking for a list of the volumes offered, together with full particulars, and these will be sent you by return of post. If you don't care for them—well no harm is done.

A LITTLE DANGEROUS.—He (designingly). "What a terrible thing it would be if some rascal should marry you for your money."

She (discouragingly): "It would be for him—if I found it out."

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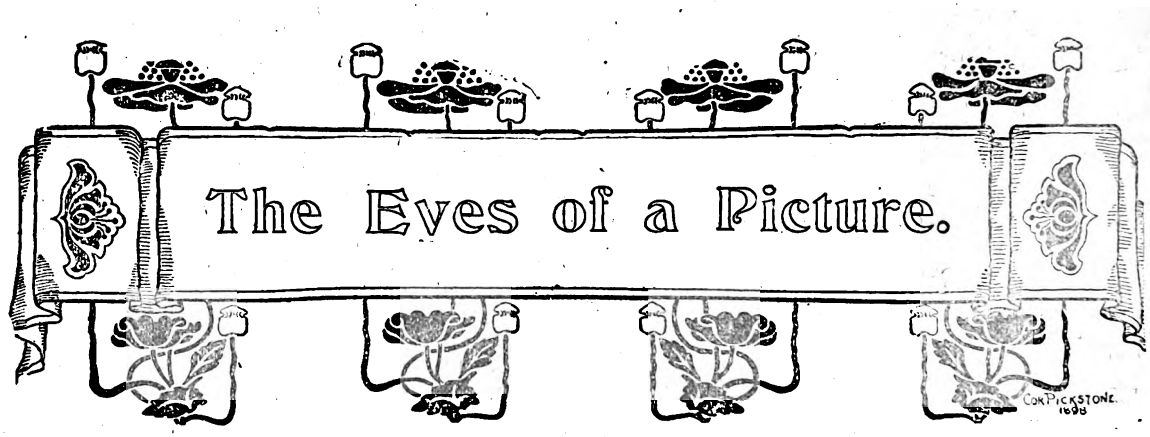
The Eyes of a Picture.



When I became the occupant of the Château Blanc, in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau, I found that my wish for a place of complete seclusion was likely to be realised to the full I was not in a suitable state of mind for society, and I had deliberately given myself three months in which to fight out a certain battle with myself, for which I needed solitude and reflection.

When the old woman who acted as caretaker of the place took me through it on a tour of inspection, there were three things which, in spite of my preoccupation with my own affairs, struck me very forcibly.

The first was the forlorn remnants of the body of a white swan, which must once have been a creature of splendid size and shape. My informant told me that this swan had been a great pet of the former owner of the château, until some accident had killed it; after which it had been stuffed and fastened in its place upon the surface of the little lake under his window. There it was still—what remained of it—a mass of weather-beaten and dirty feathers.

Another thing that compelled my strong attention was a certain picture that hung in the bedroom of the late owner, and which I was informed was his own portrait, painted by himself. This room, by the way, was sinister and mysterious in its effect beyond any I had ever entered. One reason for this was the fact that all the furniture, which was elaborately carved and must once have been of beautiful polish and colour, had been ruthlessly covered with a coat of black paint—the bed, the table, chairs, wardrobe, chest of drawers, and even the great leather easy-chair, which was placed just under the picture facing the opposite wall.

It was a wretched piece of work, that picture, representing a man dressed in some sort of court dress of the last century, and it would have seemed ineffectual to the last degree but for the truly marvellous expression of the eyes, which were fixed on a certain spot in the wall opposite, with an earnestness and intensity which made me feel that there was some hidden significance in this look. The man not only stared at the spot himself, but he compelled me to do the same, to look again and again.

And yet there was nothing to see. The wall was perfectly bare in that place; and covered with a meaningless sort of wall paper which gave no encouragement whatever.

Another thing that I noticed specially, with a feeling of being imperiously directed to do so, was a large rusty key that hung on the wall directly under the picture. When I inquired of the old woman what this key belonged to, she answered that she had never known, but that it had been hung there by the late proprietor and had been undisturbed since his death. That event had occurred many years ago, and it was owing to the provisions of the will left by him that no one had ever occupied the house in the interval. The prescribed time had only just expired, and I was the first person to rent the château, the revenue from which was to go to a nephew who lived abroad.

The sombreness of the black chamber suited my frame of mind, and I decided on taking it for my room. Besides this, the picture, the key, and the white swan all interested me, and as it was the first time that an outside interest had made any headway against the melancholy of my own thoughts, these objects, far from cheerful as they were in themselves, afforded a grateful diversion.

So continually did I wonder why the picture looked always, and could compel me to look, at that one spot, and why the key had been hung in that place and kept its position so many years undisturbed, as if some ghostly guardian watched over it, and why, ever and always, the old white swan compelled me, as if by some irresistible power, to connect it with these other things, that I kept myself awake at night, weaving all sorts of stories concerning these objects, and spent half my days in looking from the picture to the wall, and back again to the key, and then out of the window at the battered effigy of a noble bird beneath it, until the confusion of mind thus produced seemed likely to drive me crazy.

I expended all the ingenuity of which I was master in questioning the old woman, who had lived here in the time of the former owner, bnt the satisfaction of my curiosity in that direction was rather meagre.

She told me that her former master had had a wife whom he adored, fair as an angel, and gifted with a divinely beautiful voice such as none had ever heard, before or since. This young wife had been snatched from him by a sudden and frightful death. The fever which seized her had been so contagious, the woman said, that every one had fled the premises, except one woman servant and the master himself. These, with the help of the doctor, had nursed the young wife through her brief illness until its end.

My informant had heard it said that the circumstances of her death were very peculiar—that in her delirium, on the very last night of her illness, those who had

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ventured to linger about the premises had heard her singing more gloriously than ever in her life; that it had reminded them of the great white swan, which but the night before had sung its last sweet song on the lake, in the moonlight, and had been found dead in the morning.

The woman who had remained to help the master in his last sad ministrations to his dying and dead wife had gone away the day after the funeral, and had never been heard of since.

The funeral, in the quaint old church but a few paces from the house, had been, from the woman's account, melancholy enough. Scarcely anyone dared to come to it, so malignant had been this fever, and it was feared that the few men who were willing to act as bearers would not be equal to the task; but the poor lady had been light and fairy-like in figure, and so wasted was she from this consuming fever, that the bearers declared that her weight was scarcely more than that of an empty coffin.

The woman further said that, as the small funeral cortège was leaving the church, it had surprised everyone to see the husband, who was directly behind the coffin, pause directly under a statue of the Virgin, and single out from the great bunch of ribbons which hung there, the long strip which his young wife had placed there on the day of her marriage to him, less than a year before. It was an old custom connected with this church. Every girl married there had conformed to it, and some of the ribbons were yellow with time and almost dropping to pieces.

The longest and freshest bit of all had been put there by the beautiful young creature now lying dead in the flower of her youth and loveliness.

No one ever knew, the woman went on to say, how the master spent his days after the funeral was over. He had forbidden every servant to return, and turned a deaf ear to the rings and knocks of visitors. Months had passed, and no one held speech with him. They knew he was alive, because people who had looked through the palings had seen him walking in the garden, and one person reported having seen him carry from the house the stuffed body of the great swan and fasten it in its place on the lake, where it could be plainly seen from his window. He must have embalmed or stuffed it himself, the old woman said, for he was known to have remarkable knowledge and skill in such strange arts.

As was inevitable, after hearing all this, my interest in the picture, swan, and the key, deepened sensibly. There was certainly a touch of the supernatural about these things for me. I had only to stand near the spot on which the eyes of the picture were fastened to experience the strangest, the most overwhelmingly significant sensations I had ever known.

The spot was haunted by a presence, it seemed to me, and as often as I stood there I could feel my heart throb and cease throbbing, my breath pant and cease panting, my flesh turn cold and moist with consciousness and apprehension.

I tried to account for all this on natural grounds, but I found it was quite impossible to do so.

One day—it was the 19th of August—a hot, sultry, indescribably gloomy day, when the heavy clouds that lowered seemed only to darken the whole earth without giving forth one drop of moisture, the old woman came to my room and chanced to mention that it was the time of the death of the young mistress of the Château Blanc.

She had died, it appeared, just at midnight, between the 19th and 20th of August. After giving me this information, she said good-evening and left me to the reflections which it aroused.

I can scarcely call them reflections. They took the form, rather, of a sort of compulsion that was laid upon me to obey a certain force by which I felt myself suddenly dominated.

It was the picture that did it; this was certain, for, as often as I faltered, one look into that insistent, commanding, coercing face compelled me to go on. In obedience to its bidding, I did as follows:—

I went to an old desk in the room, and took from it some simple carpenter's tools, with which I deliberately cut through, first, the wall-papering, and then a thin boarding, which covered all the space between a door and window opposite the picture.

When this was done I saw—I cannot say whether most to my satisfaction or my horror—that I stood in front of a door—a regular, ordinary door, with panels, hinges, and, more than all, a keyhole. I glanced at the picture. It seemed to me that the canvas positively lived with expression.

The eyes commanded me to get the rusty key. I took it, fitted it in the lock, in which it turned with difficulty, and then, with my heart almost choking me with its throbs, my knees shaking under me, my body covered with a cold sweat, and my tongue dry in my mouth, I opened the door.

As it creaked on its rusty hinges, I saw, by the light of the candle which I held in my hand, a mass of cobwebs, heavily weighted with the dust of years, and, through these, a woman's figure.

It was clad—for I obeyed the eyes, which commanded me to examine it, though my heart was cold with terror—in what I made out to be a white silk gown, above which was the face, withered and awfully livid, as I had heard that the faces of the embalmed appear years after death. Still, it was recognisable as a real human face, and was surrounded by masses of yellow hair, which, even through the dust and cobwebs, gleamed with the brightness of gold.

The hands held something in their shrunken fingers—a white ribbon, with the date of her marriage and death upon it, her husband's name and her own, and these words, which, under the compelling eyes of the picture, I laboriously studied out:—

I HAVE been able to keep you near me, even in death. I have never been separated from you, or from what once was you to me. But when death shall come to me you will have no power over my body, and they will take me from you. That I am unable to help, I think only of this; you cannot suffer for it, since you have so long ceased to be, and by that time my suffering also will be over. I shall put my spirit into the eyes of my picture, which will watch over you still.

I looked from the paper to the picture. It seemed dull and inexpressive—mere canvas and paint. The power of the eyes was gone. Their spell over me was broken.

Suddenly I felt within me a long-absent yearning for human companionship—for life and love. I had come to this place impelled by a morbid and unhealthy desire for solitude, and my experiences here made me more morbid and unhealthy still. They had culminated now in this awful revelation of disappointment and death, which threw into brilliant contrast the bright possibilities which still remained to me, and I resolved to go back into the world and do my best to deserve and win these

EDNA WOODFORD.

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

VII.—Filling a Foreign Order.

"I SAY, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, as he finished reading a letter he had just received, "my brother out in Canada wants me to buy a razor strop and a suitable present for a young lady, and send them to him."

"I didn't know that a razor strop was a suitable present for a young lady," replied Mrs. Timmins, who was busy, and caught the remark imperfectly.

"It would be a suitable present for some married women; it would sharpen 'em up!" retorted Mr. Timmins. "Who said anything about a razor strop and a young lady? What I observed was that my brother in Canada wants me to send him a razor strop and a suitable present for a young lady. Now, I can get the strop, but I don't understand what kind of a present he wants."

"Let me see," mused Mrs. Timmins, her shopping instincts rising to the surface. "Does he say what kind of a young lady she is?"

"No, he doesn't!" roared Mr. Timmins. "He leaves something to the imagination of the reader. I suppose she's got legs and arms, because if she hadn't he would probably have mentioned it. What he wants is a present for an average woman; now, what can we get for her?"

"If I knew whether she was a blonde or a brunette, I could tell better what she would like," replied Mrs. Timmins, who, like the rest of her sex, always associates a woman with the colour that becomes her best. "Do you suppose he means something for her to wear, or some ornament for her house? You see I don't know whether she keeps house or lives at home."

"What difference does that make?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "She's probably a human being; but we will suppose she roosts in a tree. Does that help you? Can you think of something useful for a female who lives in a tree, and hops with light-hearted skips from bough to bough like a blessed crow?"

"You might get her a toilet set," suggested Mrs. Timmins, taking refuge in a woman's one idea of an appropriate present for another woman.

"She doesn't want a toilet set," snorted Mr. Timmins, "any more'n she wants the chicken pox. Think of something that is pretty, and at the same time that she can use. Now think!"

"How would one of those new painted porcelain flower-pots do?" ventured Mrs. Timmins.

"That's it!" howled Mr. Timmins; "a flower-pot with a beastly saucer under it to catch the water till it overflows on the carpet! That's your idea! One with broken-legged spiders painted on the outside and a hole in the bottom, so she can use it for a spyglass! That's the idea! A six-shilling flower-pot for a threepenny rose bush with the blind staggers and a touch of the pip! Where's the pot? Fetch the highly-seasoned flower-pot!"

And Mr. Timmins leant back in his chair and glared at his wife.

"I tell you what will do, my dear," said Mrs. Timmins, approaching the next suggestion cautiously. "Why not send an album?"

"You mean one of those books for a lot of idiots to wish they were dead in?" asked Mr. Timmins suspiciously.

"No," replied Mrs. Timmins, "a photographic album."

"Don't want it," sniffed Mr. Timmins contemptuously. "You mean that sort of a thing that a girl always brings out after tea and says: 'That's ma, and that's pa, and that's aunt Vi and her little boy, and that's Uncle Simon, and that's Aunt Flo, and that's Uncle John, and that's my niece Nellie, isn't she sweet? And that's a a dog we used to own, and I don't know who that is, and that's Clara Morris!'

"Don't want it!" And Mr Timmins's voice rose to steam-whistle pitch.

"Do you suppose I'm going to inflict a suffering world with a bookful of old stagers that all look alike and have been in every album since Adam began to wear trousers? Can't ye think of something sensible?"

"Wouldn't half-a-dozen forks be nice?" faltered Mrs. Timmins, almost at her wits' ends.

"Just the thing!" gasped Mr. Timmins. "Half a dozen pitchforks and a ton of hay. Then you might throw in a hen coop and a rat climbing over the back paling. You've got ideas about such things! All you want is a white beard and a chimney to be Father Christmas! With your intelligence on these subjects you only need a glass front and a glue pot to be a toy shop! I'm going to buy this present myself!" and Mr. Timmins shot out of the house and tore down the street with his head sunk into his shoulders and his fists in his pockets.

In an hour he returned all grins and tossed a parcel in his wife's lap.

"Now, my dear, what do you think of that?" he asked cheerfully.

Mrs. Timmins opened the parcel and disclosed a huge crimson handkerchief that would have made a tabernacle tent for a camp meeting.

"How did you come to think of it?" she asked, holding it up admiringly.

"Why," replied Mr. Timmins, "he said in the letter if I couldn't think of anything else to get a handsome handkerchief. Here it is," and Mr. Timmins drew out the letter triumphantly.

"But he doesn't say handkerchief; he says a nice handkerchief-case! Here's the case on the next line," said Mrs. Timmins mildly, planting her thumb on the supplemental word.

"Bless the man!" he replied. "Why doesn't he write plain? Why didn't you tell me before what he wanted? What did you let me break my neck to get this flag for when he wanted a box? If I didn't have any more sense than you've got I'd put broken glass on my head and let myself out for the back wall of a lunatic asylum!"

And Mr. Timmins dived into his chair, and snored lustily until bed time.

"Anyhow," thought Mrs. Timmins as she put the handkerchief away, "I can find out where he bought it, and exchange it for things for the baby."

And Mrs. Timmins fired another charge of ipecacuanha into the infant, hushing its startled cries, as Mr. Timmins, fast asleep, slid out of his chair like a load of coal.

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The Toss of a Coin.

"LOST!"

The young man spoke quietly, but there was a somewhat hopeless ring in his voice. He leant back in his chair and looked at the man sitting opposite him.

"Since I have lost everything," he continued, "our play must now cease. You have won from me all I possess. Are you not satisfied?"

"Not quite," replied the other. He hesitated a moment, then continued: "It is true that I have won all your money and your property, but there is still something left to you which I would fain win."

Rupert Gainsford glanced at him inquiringly. The two men were seated in a spacious room, one of the suite set apart for Rupert's use in the Gainsford mansion whenever he chose to visit his uncle. He was a young fellow of about twenty-four years of age; his companion was Nicholas Harley, an older man, and one whose name sounded ill in the ears of the better class of the aristocracy of London as it was in the latter days of the reign of His Most Gracious Majesty, George III.

Owing to a service which he had accidentally been able to render Sir Henry Gainsford, Harley was an occasional visitor at Gainsford House. But of late his visits had been more frequent, and he had endeavoured to place himself on very friendly terms with the nephew and heir.

On this particular evening, Nicholas Harley had steadily urged Rupert to play cards with him in order to regain some of the money which he had lost during the previous few days. Rupert Gainsford was scarcely better than many of the young gallants of his time, and of late Nicholas had seemed to gain considerable ascendancy over him, with the result that his style of living had not improved. They had retired to this room rather early in the evening and had continued their play, while Sir Henry and his daughter Dorothy had gone earlier than usual to their own apartments.

All through the two hours' play luck had apparently been against Rupert. Little by little he had lost his money and his possessions, until finally he had thrown down the cards at the end of a game with the exclamation at the beginning of this story.

Nicholas Harley's remark that there was still something left to play for, excited Rupert's curiosity.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "I have lost everything."

"Listen," replied Nicholas. "You are betrothed to your cousin, Mistress Dorothy. I propose that we shall regard her as the stake for a fresh game and——"

"How dare you mention her so lightly!" cried Rupert angrily, as he pushed back his chair and sprang to his feet.

"Tut, tut, man!" said Harley as quietly as though the other had made no movement. "Sit down and listen to what I have to say. You are but ill-acquainted with me if you think I would speak lightly of your cousin."

Rupert sank back into the chair and waited for the other to continue. It struck him that there was an unusual ring of sincerity in the man's voice as he uttered the last words, and his anger cooled a little.

"You are betrothed to your cousin," continued Nicholas, "and the marriage has been planned, as I understand, ever since you were children. I know that you care but little, if at all, for your cousin in the way that a man should care for the woman who is to be his wife. With you, as with men generally, marriage is not a love affair, but a mere matter of course, the only conditions being that your bride shall be of equal rank at least, and that she shall have sufficient personal attractions to grace your household. Beyond that, you care nothing. Is not that true?"

"And presuming that it is true?" queried Rupert, ignoring the question.

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"I desire to wed Mistress Dorothy," Harley went on, "and——"

But he was interrupted by a laugh from Rupert Gainsford.

"*You!*" sneered the young fellow. "The only recommendation you have is riches which have come into your possession—well, suddenly. You are not of noble family and your good looks—but I will not harass your feelings by referring to them!"

Although Harley raged inwardly under this criticism, he remained outwardly cool. It was his policy to be conciliatory, and in his determination he never allowed anything to spoil the attainment of his object.

"I grant," he said, "that I cannot boast of so comely an appearance or of such descent as yourself, but I can offer to your cousin that which you cannot—I can offer her love. You think that I stand but little chance of winning her affection, but I tell you that you do not understand the power of a man's love over a woman. That love will in time be returned by her, however improbable it may seem to you. It is in woman's nature to look for love, and when she sees that she is the object of a man's deep and undivided affection, her soul unconsciously goes out to him; the man's love has broken down all barriers, she disregards all else, and she loves him!"

He stopped abruptly, as though his feelings overcame him.

"Still, you don't tell me why you proposed her as the stake for a fresh game," remarked Rupert, moved by Harley's words and by the suppressed emotion evident in his voice. He still resented the proposal, but his curiosity and interest were aroused.

"While you are in the way," returned Harley, "I stand no chance of winning Mistress Dorothy. You may be as poor as a church mouse, but your uncle has set his heart upon the marriage."

"I *am* out of the way, since I have nothing now to offer her," replied Rupert. "I could not wed her in my present position, and I would not accept my uncle's charity. When he dies, I am heir to his property, but I have honour enough not to accept it now, although my kind-hearted uncle would give me all he possesses. And he is good for another twenty years yet—Heaven bless him! No, I have nothing to live for, and will seek death on the field in Spain or elsewhere."

"No, you will be in my way as long as you live—whether you be poor or rich," said Harley firmly. "With you dead, I could hope to gain Mistress Dorothy's hand. My love and Sir Henry's gratitude will help me. This is the stake I propose. You have told me that life is useless to you. I will put all that I have won from you against your life—that is: If you win the game you will re-enter into all your possessions; if you lose you will undertake to commit suicide within forty-eight hours and leave the way open to me."

It was a strange proposal, and Harley waited with ill-concealed anxiety for Rupert's reply. Rupert was in a frame of mind admirably adapted for the attainment of his companion's object; he was dejected and annoyed at his foolishness in allowing himself to be drawn into the excitement of gambling to the extent of utterly ruining himself and spoiling a life that offered such bright prospects. He could not now bear to face his cousin and his uncle and to show himself in the light of a profligate, and his companion's proposal offered just the chance of retrieving himself.

If he lost, what did it matter that he was bound to commit suicide? He might as well end his career that way and at once, as go off and die in battle or of fever in some foreign country. There was something else—a feeling that was new to him; he had lost Dorothy! And here was a chance of winning her back.

"I accept!" he cried impulsively. "Let us try again and see if fortune will favour you to the end, or whether she will turn upon you like the fickle jade she is said to be. At any rate, she has been steadfast in her attitude towards me."

Nicholas Harley gathered up the cards with a deep breath and prepared to shuffle them, but Gainsford stopped him.

"No more of those cards," he said decisively. "I have had enough of them. We will decide this stake by a throw of the dice, and finish quickly."

"No," objected Harley. "I play not with dice. Let us decide this either by the cards or, as you wish to settle it quickly, by the toss of a coin. I will place the coin in this box, shake it up, toss it up to the ceiling and allow it to fall on the ground. If the head be uppermost, I win. If it be tails, the stake is yours. I will toss it up from this box, because it is easy for a man to influence the result if he places the coin this or that way up and spins it from his forefinger and thumb. Do you agree to that?"

"So be it!" returned Gainsford. "You must furnish the coin, for I doubt whether I have one to offer—at least, not a worthy one. It is a big stake; a wife for you, or life and a wife for me."

"Oh, I have one," replied Harley rather quickly, slipping his hand into his pocket and dropping a silver piece into the box.

He shook the box vigorously, and then gave it a jerk which sent the coin spinning into the air.

There was a moment's breathless silence as the men saw the coin descending, and each bent eagerly as it touched the floor and rolled against the leg of the table.

"Heads!" cried Harley triumphantly.

Rupert glared at the coin, then with a stifled groan returned to his seat. The other picked up the coin quickly to replace it in his pocket; but in his excitement he let it slip to the carpeted floor without noticing it.

It was all over, and he was bound in honour to take his own life within forty-eight hours. Rupert sat motionless in the chair, scarcely conscious of what was passing. He saw, as in the distance, the figure of his companion going towards the door, and a faint sound of a parting greeting smote upon his ear. He had a vague feeling that Harley was leaving the house instead of passing the night there, as he had been invited to do. When at last he did rouse himself, the light of the day was peeping in through his blinds and curtains.

He got up and walked about the room. Should he put an end to his life there, or should he leave the house at once and destroy himself in some quiet spot outside London? His dull eyes wandered over the carpet, and suddenly rested upon something that glittered in the morning light. Mechanically he picked it up, and as he recognised the silver piece which had decided his fate, he put it into the pocket on the left of his waistcoat.

"Harley, at least, will recognise me by that, I expect," he muttered with a bitter smile. "Yes," he went on, after a pause, "I will put an end to my wretched existence here, I cannot live another half-hour in this torment!"

He walked into the inner room and took from its case a rather clumsy pistol. Surveying it meditatively, he slowly returned to the outer room.

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"This will be quicker than a knife," he said half aloud. "Where shall the bullet go? Into my heart, or through my stupid head? Into my heart, I think, since it is incapable of love, if Harley is correct."

He held the pistol within three or four inches of his left breast and prepared to pull the trigger. He looked round hastily and then fired, his hand trembling slightly as he did so. He felt the concussion, which caused him to stagger a step, and he heard a smash as the bullet crashed through the looking-glass on the chimney-piece at his side.

For a moment he could not understand what had happened. He had fired at his heart, as he thought, and had felt the bullet strike him, yet here he was unharmed save for a pain in his left arm. He was gazing in a dull manner at the still smoking pistol when the door of the room was pushed open and a beautiful girl of twenty, whose face betokened great alarm, rushed into the apartment.

"Oh, Rupert, what is it!" she asked in terrified accents.

Then catching sight of the smoking pistol she recoiled in horror.

"Rupert! Rupert! What does it mean?" she asked again.

But the guilty look upon his haggard face was sufficient answer for her. Instinctively she realised what had taken place, and staggering to the chair occupied on the previous night by Harley she sank into it, buried her face in her hands and wept.

The noise of hurried footsteps outside recalled Rupert to himself, and he hastened to the door in time to prevent the entry of the affrighted servants, whom he assured that his pistol had gone off by accident as he was handling it. Closing the door again he walked slowly back to where his cousin was still sitting, and tried to calm her with tender words, uttered in a shamed and hesitating manner.

"What does it mean?" she repeated, rising and facing him with tears still in her eyes. "Why have you been so wicked as to make an attempt upon your life?"

Slowly and in a shame-faced manner, although he tried to appear unconcerned and even haughty, Rupert explained the cause of his action. As he spoke, although he did not mention the exact reason of the last act of the previous evening's gambling, a flush overspread Dorothy's cheeks and was in turn reflected on his own.

"I have lost everything," he said, "and as life now is worthless to me I decided to be rid of it. What have I to live for?"

Dorothy essayed to speak, but her words were inaudible. She cast a tell-tale glance at him and her eyes drooped, while the flush deepened on her cheeks. But Rupert misunderstood the reason of her agitation.

"Yes," he said bitterly. "It is true, I have nothing to live for now. Even you turn from me as I knew you would."

"Rupert! Do not speak so cruelly!" cried Dorothy, raising her eyes to his and clasping her hands. "Oh, why will you force me to speak these words—why will you force me to tell you that I want you to live for my sake, that I—I—love you, Rupert?" Then overcome by her emotion, and her cheeks burning with shame, she would have fallen back into the chair had not her cousin, with a wild impulse, his heart stirred by a sensation that was new to him, clasped her in his arms and pressed her passionately to his breast.

For a brief space they remained thus lost in ecstasy, but it was not long ere memory returned to Rupert and he gently pushed her from him.

"It's too late, Dorothy!" he cried passionately. "I have pledged my word, and whatever I am I will not fail to keep that. Had Fortune favoured me, that pledge would now have been kept, but something—how could it have happened? Why did not the bullet pierce my heart as I had intended?"

His hand wandered to his left side as if seeking some explanation, and he felt the coin which he had placed in his pocket. The truth flashed across his mind at the contact, and he drew forth the silver piece and held it towards Dorothy.

"This is the coin by which I lost my life, and yet it has been instrumental in saving it this morning. I cannot do better than give it to you, Dorothy, and ask you to keep it in memory of me. For the accident of this morning cannot cancel a gentleman's word of honour."

He handed it to her, and she took it mechanically, shuddering as she touched it. As she raised it from his hand she turned it, and then uttered an exclamation.

"What a strange coin, Rupert!" she cried. "How could you decide a bet with such a one as this? It has two heads—it is alike both sides."

Rupert started and quickly took the coin from her hand.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it *is* a strange coin. I will communicate with Harley about this. And now, Dorothy, dear, go back to your room and leave me. I must be alone."

Dorothy hesitated and placed her hand upon his arm.

"I cannot go unless you will promise me—not to——"

"I promise you very willingly, my sweet Dorothy," answered Rupert, as he took her in his arms and kissed her again. "Be not afraid for me now, for this piece of money has brought life, a new life, for Rupert Gainsford. All will be well for us yet."

She left the room, and Rupert seated himself at the table and wrote in clumsy style, for his hand was not experienced in the use of the pen, a short letter to Nicholas Harley. He was about to sign it, hesitating whether to add anything more, when he noticed on the table one of the cards, which Harley had left behind—for it was his own pack. The card was half hidden by a wine-bottle which had been set upon it.

Rupert took it up and examined it. A peculiar expression flitted across his face, and he continued his letter. When finished, it read as follows:

"I am returning to you a silver piece which you dropped here by accident instead of replacing it in your pocket at the close of last night's play. It is a curious coin, and one which no doubt has great value in your eyes. In return for its restoration I require you to cancel all my obligations to you. As I have a witness of this transaction, it will be useless for you to dispute it. On hearing from you, I will also return one of the pack of cards belonging to you, with which we played last night. It is a pity that such a pack should be spoilt by the loss of one card, for I notice that this one has a peculiar marking on the back, which may account for the good fortune which has attended you during the past few days. Perhaps it is a gambler's superstition which induces you to play with your own cards!"

G. MERRIAM.

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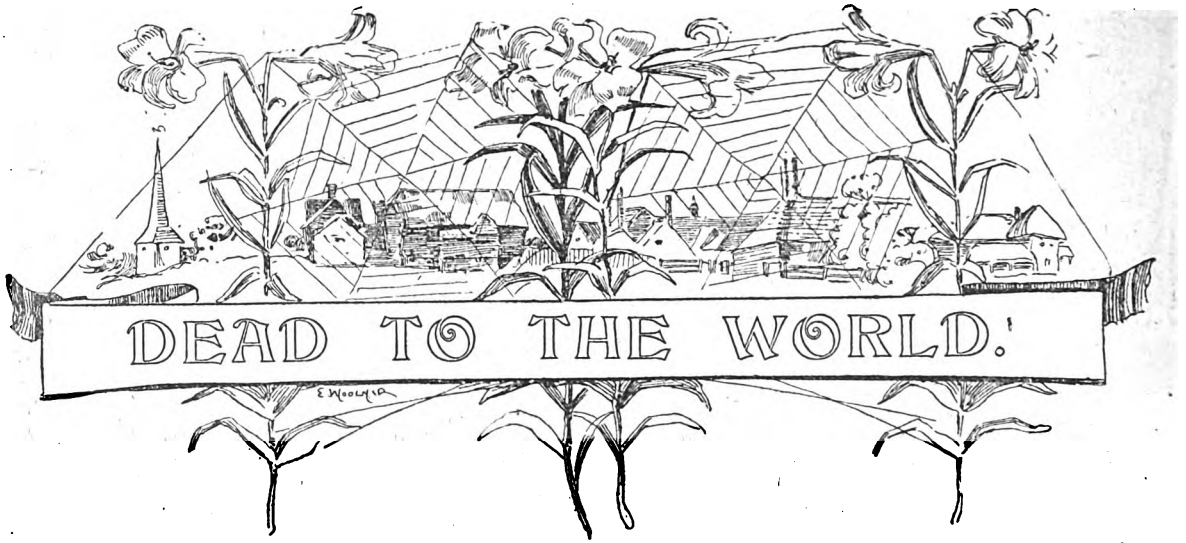

AMONG all the fatalities with which fate has crossed the lives of men, there was never one more strange than that which befell George Weston in the month of August, A.D. 1893.

He was the junior member of the firm of Hamlin and Weston, of Wellington, New Zealand, and was going home to dinner, in good spirits, about five o'clock in the afternoon.

His firm was negotiating for the purchase of a tract of timber growing some four hundred miles away, and he was to start on the following morning on a tour of inspection, which would take several weeks. He loved the life of the woods, and anticipated good sport, as well as a profitable business journey.

Near the telephone building in Clifford Street he was stopped by an old man with a long grey beard, the face of a Greek philosopher, and large eyes as calm and clear as those of a toad. He was a foreigner of some kind, and his speech was a queer jumble of words, that sounded as though he had learnt the language from the dictionary. He pointed his long finger at Weston's face, and called his attention to a twitching of the muscles of the cheek, which recurred at intervals, and in an impressive manner, pronounced this to be incipient paralysis, sure to develop with fatal result, unless arrested in time. The cure, certain and speedy, was contained in the small phial which he placed in Weston's hand.

"My name and address," said he, "are on the scroll about the phial, and when success is assured, with your sense of justice I leave my compensation to you."

With a bow he was gone, disappearing round the corner of the street.

Now, the one persistent annoyance of Weston's life was this spasmodic contraction of his facial muscles. It had been present ever since he could remember, and though causing him no real inconvenience it had always worried him. It was the restiveness and irritation which men of perfect health and robust physique always feel at some trifling blemish, and he had tried all manner of means to get rid of it.

He had tired of regular medical advisers, who made light of the matter, and bravely encountered the good-natured ridicule of his friends, and had taken to nostrums and patent medicines, and swallowed unlimited doses of infallible remedies, with no other result than the occasional derangement of his powerful digestion.

The peculiarly venerable and striking appearance of the stranger impressed him that, although at first he had no thought of using this new specific, the possibility of his doing so was in his mind when he reached home.

Mrs. Weston was a matter-of-fact woman, who believed in all things respectable and orthodox, and had no faith in anything else; and she was not in the least impressed by her husband's eloquent description of the venerable and majestic appearance of the stranger, but unhesitatingly pronounced him a swindling quack, and advised her husband to have nothing to do with his medicine, which was quite likely to prove to be some slow poison, that would either kill him, or give him some incurable drug habit.

Thus rebuffed, Weston dropped the subject, and went about his preparations for the morrow's journey.

As the train was to leave very early in the morning, it was arranged that he should occupy their spare bedroom downstairs, so that he might go out without disturbing his family at an unearthly hour.

Alone in his room, after bidding his wife good-bye, Weston brought out the phial and took off the paper that was wrapped round it. It was an odd name on it, which added to the impression its owner had already made upon him.

"Iconax Bagristus, M.D., Ph.D." The directions were simple: "Half-an-ounce. Take whole on retiring." The contents of the phial were colourless, and an application of the tongue proved them to be tasteless.

After a moment's hesitation, he drank it at a single swallow, put the empty phial and paper on the dressing-table, and went to bed.

He fell asleep almost immediately, and so profound was his slumber that, when aroused by the rattle of the alarm clock, he sprang to the floor with a feeling of being late. He seemed to have slept days instead of hours. He dressed quickly, and noiselessly left the house; and, as he inhaled the fresh air of early morning, he felt strangely vigorous and young, and had a schoolboy's impulse to break into a run as he went down the silent street.

That evening he arrived at a town on the coast,

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whence, on the following day, he was to take passage on a small steamer that made weekly trips to fishing stations a hundred miles, or thereabouts, farther along the coast.

On reaching the end of his first day's journey, Weston found that the boat left on her day trip earlier than he supposed, in fact, would pull out about ten o'clock the next morning, which left him but short time to make his necessary preparations—which consisted in laying in a stock of provisions, and securing the services of a couple of men as assistants. For this reason, it came about that he could only write a brief note to his wife, announcing his safe arrival, and which in his hurry he forgot to post, and carried off with him to the woods.

He left the steamer at the mouth of a small river, some thirty miles from his destination, and with his guides and stores, made his way a day's journey up stream, where they pitched their camp.

Here, for the next two weeks, Weston lived the life of a wild Indian, and no Indian ever roamed the woods in a more savage state of health and spirits. He surprised himself, and tired out his tough companions, by his strength and endurance.

There were some features of his physical condition so marked as to be rather startling. The facial convulsions had wholly disappeared, which was a great relief to his mind. Then there were changes in the matter of his taste for various articles of food—a decided disinclination for many little luxuries and knick-knacks for which he had formerly had a liking—and a general tendency of his appetite in the direction of plain articles of diet. He had been a smoker for years, but now discovered that his taste for tobacco was gone.

All this was very well, but there were some other things that seemed uncanny, and nearly gave him a turn when he first noticed them.

Like everybody else, he had various scars on his person, tokens of the scratches, cuts, and bruises he had received in the chance medley of life. These had all disappeared. Even the anchor that he had, when a boy, paid a sailor to tattoo on his arm was gone! His body was as free from blemish as that of a new born baby.

And there was something else he had noticed shortly after leaving home. He had a ring with a ruby setting that his partner Hamlin had given him the day he was twenty-one—when he became a member of the firm of Hamlin and Weston. It fitted easily at the time, but his hands had grown since then, and for several years the ring had been a fixture; and yet it was gone! And what added to his surprise, was that there was no trace or mark on his finger to show that it had ever been there!

But his high spirits easily dispelled all unpleasant feelings caused by these outer occurrences, and the enjoyment of his daily life was but little disturbed by them.

The days passed swiftly, and in two weeks his work was done, and he returned to the steamer and again took passage; and the first thing he did when he landed from her was to go to the post office, where he met with a great disappointment.

"Nothing," said the clerk, after shuffling a pile of letters.

This was so unaccountable, that Weston was sure there was a mistake, and asked the clerk to look again, and that official, being good-natured, did look again, and very carefully, but with the same result.

Now, by pre-arrangement, there should have been letters from his partner about this very business in hand, and it had seemed certain that there would at least be half-a-dozen from his wife, who it will be remembered had heard nothing from him since he left home.

It was all so unexpected that Weston had a vague idea that there had been some kind of cataclysm in his native city that had suspended ordinary pursuits and avocations. To ease his mind he bought a paper, which was of the issue of the day before, and the first thing he saw was a heading in big capitals, and under that something which threw some light on the matter.

COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.

OUR readers have not forgotten the recent death of Mr. George Weston, of the well-known firm of Hamlin and Weston, and the facts that came out at the inquest, resulting in the arrest of Dr. Iconax Bagristus, a quack doctor, of Johnson Avenue, charged with the murder of Mr. Weston.

The case came up for hearing yesterday, and the doctor was committed for trial. The case will be in the list for the next Sessions, which begins next week; it may, however, be postponed.

Weston gave a long whistle.

"Well, here's food for thought! Charged with the murder of Mr. George Weston! Facts which came out at the inquest! How the dickens could they hold an inquest without the body?"

But however mystifying all this, it was evident that the same cause that had put Dr. Bagristus in legal jeopardy, had interfered with Weston's correspondence, and he was not long in deciding that the sooner he appeared at home the better it would be for all concerned.

He looked at the time tables, and he found that the first train for him would leave at ten o' clock in the evening. He then hunted up the back numbers of the papers to learn what he could of the origin of this mystery. He found the starting point in the evening paper of the day he left home; and if there was a trace of amusement in his first impressions, it vanished when he read the big headlines that now made his eyes open widely and almost stopped his breath.

This is what he read:

ANOTHER MYSTERY.

SUDDEN DEATH OF MR. GEORGE WESTON.

Then followed a column of details, from which it appeared that Mrs. Weston, on going to her husband's room in the morning, had found him dead in bed, and the empty phial on the dressing-table. Full particulars of the situation of the room—his reasons for occupying it that night—the position and appearance of the body—his conversation with his wife about the medicine, etc., were given with the customary elaboration of detail, and left Weston nothing to learn concerning what was happening in his house while he was being whirled away from it on that eventful day.

Had he possessed only ordinary physical and mental stamina, he would have fainted, so sudden and powerful was the shock he experienced. As it was, the room seemed whirling round and his chair sinking under him.

What a weight oppressed him! Was he himself? Yes, he could not doubt that, but who, or what, was it his wife found dead in bed? What monstrous thing had happened?

For a time he sat listless and passive, wondering, but resigned to what should come next. This state soon passed away, and he began to feel more like himself, but burning with impatience to get home and grapple with this shadowy, nameless thing of evil. But he could

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do nothing to hurry his departure, and he judged it useless to telegraph; so, schooling himself to patience, he looked over the papers of later dates for the further development of the case.

He was soon in possession of all the facts, and while his wonder was not lessened, he read what followed with composure.

In the next paper he found an account of the inquest. There was a post-mortem, and the eminent medical gentlemen who made it testified to the appearance of the body. There were indications of convulsions, the cause of which they were not prepared to specify, but which would doubtless appear when the chemist had finished his analysis. Pending the investigation, the inquest was adjourned.

Three days later was an account of the funeral, and if Weston had any post-mortem vanity it was fully gratified. The next issue told of the reassembling of the coroner's jury, and the report of the chemical experts, which sounded indefinite, and led one to surmise that the scientific gentlemen were non-plussed; and the gentlemen of the jury were evidently of that way of thinking, for they rendered a verdict of death from unknown causes.

This gave Weston a very complete history of his case, and he could think of but one plausible explanation—and that was preposterous and utterly absurd—that some tramp had entered his house after he left, and died suddenly, and the body had been mistaken for his.

But speculation was useless; all he could do was to wait.

The next evening he alighted at the well-known station. He had learnt from one of the papers that his wife and children had gone home to her father; but he decided that before following her he would see his partner, who was a bachelor and lived in rooms connected with their office; and there Weston found him alone, which was what he wanted.

Hamlin was a theosophist, and held to all sorts of occultism; but no matter what one's theoretical belief may be, no living man who had just buried his dead friend can, with composure, see that friend walk into his room with a travelling bag in his hand, and hear his hail of:

"Well, how are you, old fellow?"

Hamlin was reading, and when he heard the voice he gave a sudden start and turned half round to look at his visitor. There was another start, and a quick drawing of the breath, as Weston came nearer and stood looking down at him. At this, Hamlin passed his hand over his face and got up.

"I beg your pardon, but I did not hear you knock, and you startled me—you so much resemble—another person."

At this Weston broke out laughing.

"Well, John, this is good; but I feel rather serious about it on a count of Kate; she is in trouble, and I want to go to her as soon as possible—to-night if I can get a train."

And then, as Hamlin was silent, and looking at him strangely:

"Come! We'll have the fun later—just now I am feeling very anxious about Kate."

"I think," said Hamlin, speaking very slowly. "there is a mistake——"

"I should say there was a mistake!" broke in Weston. "A very big mistake; and how in the name of bedlam all you people—even you and Kate—could make such a blunder passes my understanding."

"May I inquire, sir, what you are talking about, and who you are, and what you want?"

There was a shade of irritability in Hamlin's voice, and Weston's face assumed a look of surprise.

"Who am I? Well, I think you and I ought to know each other by this time!"

"Look here!" said Hamlin in a sharp tone. "I don't know who you are, nor what your object may be in coming here. Your resemblance to my late partner is so remarkable that I was startled when you came into the room; but I wish to say plainly that if you purpose to make that resemblance the basis of any stupid joke, it is in very bad taste. If you have any other object, you will oblige me by stating it, or else go about your business."

At this Weston gave a cry and sank into a chair. A new and alarming view of his case was dawning on him. Hitherto he had supposed that he had only to show himself, to be recognised and received. He was seized with dread, and a fear came upon him that he had lost his place in the human family; and as he thought of his family he gave another cry, and stretched out his shaking hands towards his partner.

"For Heaven's sake, John, don't say that you don't know me! Don't say that I am not your old friend, George Weston!"

The relations between these two men were closer than those of ordinary business associates. Hamlin was fifteen years Weston's senior, and had been an elder brother to him all his life.

There is a Freemasonry in human love: certain undefinable gestures—inflexions of the voice—glances of the eye, and other signs that cannot be simulated; and as Weston sat there, with his outstretched quivering hands, there was in his face the old coaxing pleading look that Hamlin knew, and that he had seen and felt so many, many years ago, when the orphan boy he loved had made some appeal from his judgment to his affection. And now this familiar look penetrated his armour of common-sense and went to his heart.

"Hang it all! I don't know what to do, nor what to think! A week ago I buried my friend and brother, George Weston; and to-night he apparently comes back to me in life and health! Am I dreaming? Or out of my senses? Speak to me, George—for I can't help calling you so—tell me something, can't you?"

"Now you give me hope," said Weston with a great sob of relief. "I thought I was lost. Sit down and I will tell you all about it."

He sat down, and Weston told his story. When it was finished, Hamlin got up and began walking about the room.

As the train which he intended to take to follow his wife left before business hours the next morning, and they wanted to see Murray, the lawyer who was defending Bagristus, they went to his house, and there they encountered a rebuff that annihilated all hopes.

The lawyer listened to their story with evident contempt and indignation, and at its conclusion bluntly told Weston that he considered him an impostor, and almost rudely refused to enter into any discussion of the matter.

As he accompanied them to the door he relaxed a little and spoke a few words to Hamlin; Weston he utterly ignored.

"You need have no concern as to Dr. Bagristus. He is not charged with murder; only with manslaughter, and they can't convict him of that. They have found no

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poison in the stomach, and they will not. He will be acquitted."

They went away, and for some time walked in silence, the same depressing thought in the minds of both. At length Weston gave utterance to it in a voice that was like a groan:

"It's no use, John! No one will believe that I am George Weston—not even Kate. For how can I prove my identity?"

"I am afraid it is so."

"I know it is," continued Weston bitterly, "I can see it all now. There are innumerable and unsurmountable obstacles, which must for ever separate me from Kate. I am a lost man!"

"Don't say that, George. We must think; we must plan; but first let us get back to my rooms."

Not another word was spoken until they reached his quarters; and then of a sudden Hamlin seemed to go crazy. He turned upon Weston and shook him until his hat fell off.

"What idiots! What are our heads good for, I wonder? The thing is so simple that it is strange we didn't think of it at first. You must marry Kate!"

"Marry Kate! What do you mean?"

"Just that exactly. You must marry her again, not now—not at once—but after a while—after a suitable time has elapsed."

"I don't see how that will help matters," said Weston.

"Why, it's all plain enough. You go away now, you disappear, in fact you haven't appeared much in your present state. You take a new name, let's see, your mother's name was Barnard; take that, George Barnard. In about a year George Barnard appears, gets acquainted with George Weston's widow, courts her, marries her, and lives happily ever after! What is the matter with that?"

"Why nothing, I suppose; but it is hardly satisfactory either. It is so long to wait, and I don't like the notion of Kate's being willing to marry another fellow. And then, I shall go dangling through life as her second husband, and step-father of my own children."

"But you can't get back on the old footing. That is gone by. You are legally dead—and you have no place among these living men, and you can't crowd in anywhere. You are out of the world, and the only way to get back is to marry into it. And you can even get your name back. It is not unusual for the groom to take the bride's name, and I think I shall insist on that, so that our firm can keep its old style."

"Oh, Kate, Kate!" groaned Weston, "how the time will drag!"

"Let it drag," said Hamlin, "so long as it keeps at it. I will keep you posted as to events. My hand shall be over Kate, and I will see that nothing interferes with our plans. In a short year you will be back, and then all our troubles will be

In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

Courage, my friend; let us face the inevitable. George Weston is dead. Long live George Weston!"

While they were at breakfast the next morning, Hamlin took up the newspaper, and when he had opened it, gave a yell.

"For Heaven's sake, what is this! Suicide of Dr. Iconax Bagristus! The murderer of George Weston committed suicide in his cell last evening!"

"I can't understand that."

Just then there was a knock at the door and a messenger gave him a letter from Murray.

DEAR SIR,

Since your call in the matter of Bagristus, an event has occured that leads me to think that I owe you an apology for my somewhat rude reception of your communication. Having occasion later yesterday evening to visit my client at the jail, I mentioned to him (for what reason I do not know) the statement which you had made. This threw him at once into a state of extraordinary excitement, the moving cause of which seemed to be his belief that he had at last (and, as I inferred, by accident), made the great discovery he had so long sought—the elixir of life. His mental exaltation was so great that I could transact no business with him, and so came away, leaving him in what I should term a state of ecstasy. I was therefore much surprised to hear that he had committed suicide. At once I repaired to the jail and inspected and identified the body. I remained there half-an-hour, and as the night was pleasant decided to walk home. I had proceeded as far as the Library, and was passing it, when a man who was walking quite fast, came behind me, and put his hand on my shoulder. I turned quickly and saw—Dr. Bagristus! I make this statement as a statement of a fact as it then appeared to me. He gave me a paper, spoke a few words in a hurried and incoherent manner, and then disappeared round the corner.

I went to a light and read the paper, which was as follows:

"HONOURED ADVOCATE,

"I will not abide the slow progress of the interminable law. The Great Secret is to me opened, and I am of all things the possessor. To elude the myrmidons of the prison was in the darkness easy. Of your high courtesy, accept my humble thanks for your great goodness.

"ICONAX BAGRISTUS, M.D., Ph.D."

I returned to the jail as quickly as possible. It had not been more than twenty minutes since I left it. I found the attendants still busied about the disposition of the body. I again inspected the body; I found that no strangers had been seen about the place, nor had anything unusual occurred. I then left the jail and went to my home. I have no explanation to make, nor opinion to give as to this affair. And as, on reflection, it seems to me that an apology is due to you, as before stated, the same is therefore tendered.

Yours truly,
THOMAS MURRAY.

The foregoing events occurred in the summer of 1893.

In the autumn of the next year, the following notice appeared in the papers:

MARRIED.—On the 10th inst., by the Rev. John Pontifex, at the bride's residence in Sparrow Street, George Barnard of Duluth, and Katherine, widow of the late George Weston, of this city.

GUY SOUTHWELL.

MR. ASKIN: "How did you get rid of that odious little fellow Bookwright, who talked shop?"
Miss Playfair: "I talked shopping."

JACK (who has popped): "It takes you a long time to decide."
Sallie: "I know. And I've about concluded to wear a demi-train of white chiffon over white silk, and have no bridesmaids."

MRS. YOUNGBRIDE: "How is it that you charge a penny a quart more than the other milkman?"
Waterpotts: "Madam, you must remember that all my milk is hand-milked. That, of course, makes the price a little higher."

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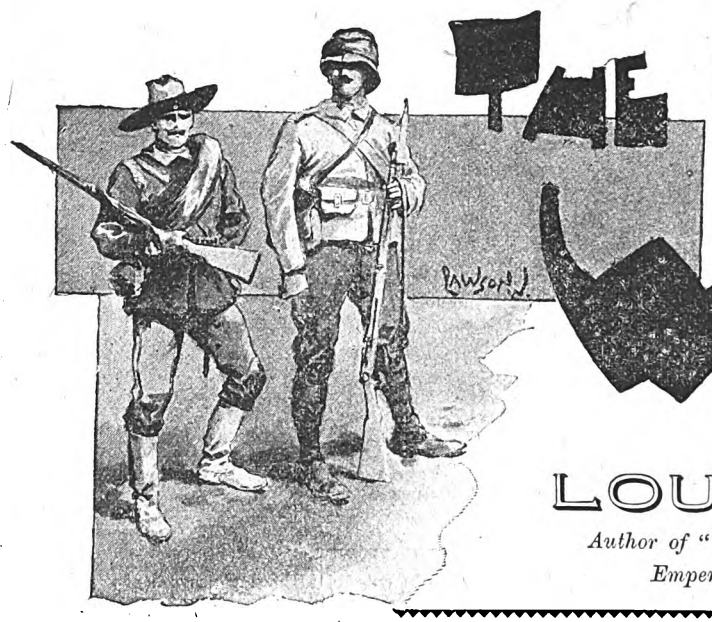

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XLIX. (*continued*).

THERE was a general disposition to good-humoured riot throughout the camp that night, and the fiery colour-sergeant made little effort to check the spirits of his festive company. Jest ran high, and many an improvised song dealt, as Tommy loves to deal, with the delicate diplomatic position that lay before the two chief actors. One of them ended thus, to a catchy tune which was quickly taken up:

When I saw our William, damme,
He was blubbing for his mammy,
And he pined for German sausage and for stuerkraut in pails.
So says I unto the Kaiser:
"You may go away to-day, sir,
But you'd best look out to-morrow when you meet the Prince of Wales."

And there was indeed cause for both these distinguished personages to look to their conference on the morrow with some anxiety. If the Prince's mission was delicate, the Emperor's was still more so. True, he had not to meet the representative of England as a captive. That indignity was spared him. But Dr. Jameson's escapade had considerably embarrassed his situation. It was difficult to plead the equality of a commander surrounded by an unbeaten army.

It was not what could be said, but what neither would care to say, that formed the difficulty. The Prince of Wales could not hint that the Kaiser's cause was lost, and that the latter was suing as a defeated general. The Kaiser dared not confessed that terms of peace were only such as the British Government might insist on. Beneath the surface of courteous words there was bound to be a subtle war of hidden meaning. It was to be a contest of tact; and the Kaiser reflected not with overmuch equanimity, that tact was not a particularly striking element in his character.

An hour before noon on the next day, the Emperor set out with a small staff of officers to the memorable farm-house midway between Westhausen and Lauenburg. He had taken the precaution early in the day of laying bare his heart to Hohenlohe. The German Chancellor did not mince matters as he gave his earnest advice.

"Peace! Before all things, peace!" he exclaimed at the close of his remarks. "We must not forget, sire, that fencing is waste of force and fights against us, when the conclusion is obvious. It is better to accept with grace than irritate by useless argument. Your Majesty will use the occasion well, and miss no opening that the English Prince may give you; but I would humbly recommend that, if you fail to achieve what you propose, it is better to submit to the generosity of Great Britain than incur her anger."

The Kaiser had no retort to make, but thanked his counsellor submissively.

When he reached the rendezvous and entered the farm-house, past which he remembered so well riding but three nights before, he had time to collect his thoughts and to ruminate, somewhat mournfully, on the task before him.

He wished that the hours he had spent upon the elaboration of ornate proclamations, swollen with plethoric terms, had been bestowed upon acquiring the nice distinctions of subtle speech, for he had cause to fear the unassuming tongue of his opponent. It was rich in resource; it was strewn with unsuspected pitfalls and deceptive turns. Danger lurked in a compliment, and in concession there was guile. The Prince, beyond all men he had ever met, possessed the rare gift of tact. He lured his adversaries to their ruin. He had an innocence of phrase that was a snare unto the thoughtless, and in his honey there was gall.

And then the Kaiser reflected that the English language had an embarrassing wealth of terms; it boasted as many words as any three Continental tongues. Each one of these was an armed man waiting to do him battle. He was hopelessly outnumbered before he entered into the engagement.

Half-an-hour had elapsed when an orderly announced the arrival of the Prince of Wales. The young monarch rose to welcome his relative and foe.

All others retired.

The Emperor noticed that his visitor made him formal greeting and did not offer him his hand.

Colouring slightly, he opened the conference.

"Permit me, first, your Royal Highness," he said, "to thank the British Goverment for its generosity in giving me my liberty. It was a chivalrous action worthy of a generous foe."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince gravely. "It is for us to regret that you did not communicate your desire for an armistice to the Commander-in-Chief of our Second Army Corps. It would have prevented an unfortunate occurrence which I at least deeply regret."

"For that I do not care a jot!" exclaimed the Kaiser, with warmth. "I am ready at all times to accept the fortunes of war upon my own person."

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"You misunderstand me," was the reply. "Much as I am concerned by that mishap, I was thinking of the preparations carried out at Southampton, which an early telegram would have delayed. Your message reached Her Majesty too late to prevent the embarkation and dispatch of a corps of over 150,000 additional troops, largely American, which I presume are now in the act of landing upon the quays of Hamburg!"

The Emperor started. Here was a new and unpleasant factor in the game. He had practically lost even his superiority of force.

"Let us forget such circumstances for a time," he begged. "Believe me, I have long commenced to regret my haste in co-operating in such an enterprise. The war is a terrible blunder. I feel it deeply. You will scarcely doubt my sincerity?"

"Not in the least, your Majesty," returned the Prince heartily, "not even if you were to insist that it dated as far back as the battle of Worthing."

This delicate thrust brought flames of colour to the Kaiser's cheeks.

"You are severe, sir," he said. "I embarked upon this war in error. I imagined it essential to the extension of the German Empire. I was wrong. My error I have seen most clearly, and it is surely not unnatural that I should hasten to confess it."

An orderly announced the arrival of the Prince of Wales.

"By no means," observed the Prince sententiously. "Time frequently works great changes in our opinions."

"Before matters have reached a climax," continued the Emperor, "whilst Germany still boasts her inexhaustible armies, whilst yet a decisive blow is lacking which should place either of us in an inferior position, I have begged that we may meet and seek some conclusion that may leave the honour of either of us untouched. Germany has nothing to gain by a continuance of this frightful struggle."

"So it would seem!" exclaimed the Prince sternly. "But *we* have."

"You?"

"Does it not strike you, your Majesty, that you have thundered at our gates a question? That question demands an answer. It can never be left to conjecture. You assailed us wantonly, without warning. You confess you had no reason for your swift assault. And now, driven back to your own dominions, you tell us you were wrong, and suggest that we should sheath our swords."

"In the interests of peace."

"You are a convincing advocate of peace, sir!" was the Prince's quick retort. "I fancy the argument was somewhat rudely opened!"

"And what do you gain by the continuance of war?"

"This is what we gain. A peremptory question demands a definite and final reply. You have asked whether the British Empire—I may now add, the Saxon race—can hope to withstand the shock of allied enmity. You have chosen a magnificent stage for the discussion of this delicate point. The whole world acts as audience. We cannot, we will not disappoint it. If no longer our policy of peace can secure the safety of mankind, we will at least make it certain that the savage vindication to which we have been driven shall be conclusive. These problems, clouded by the subtle rancour and secret conspiracies of European states, can no longer rest in dubiety. This war is the Final War. If we have to strike, it shall be a stroke to kill the very hope of a successor. We will not leave such doubts seething in the cauldron of international distrust and hatred. They will be resolved once for all, and no one shall again dare to raise them!"

The Emperor grew uneasy before the stern logic of the Prince.

"Whatever your purpose," he declared, "I maintain that Germany is the natural ally of England!"

"A natural ally!" exclaimed the Prince. "An alliance like that of conspirators, then, which must be sealed in blood! An alliance written on the plains of Stralsund, and scored upon the stones of Neuminster! Let us be frank your Majesty. I still await your proposals."

"I will make them clear," replied the Kaiser with hesitation, "if I have not already done so. We meet on equal terms. We both hate this infamous war of brethren. Let us gather in our forces and proclaim a peace. It is Germany's policy to seek the hand of England. Surely you can recognise in this meeting a desire that is not false? Do you fear our sincerity when our nation is still behind us?"

"We do not fear Germany, sir," declared the Prince proudly. "The German people are not with you. But who will be responsible for the vagaries of their statesmen?"

"Not their statesmen," hastily interrupted Wilhelm. "I take the blame upon myself."

"I cannot waste time in distinguishing between those of her advisers who are statesmen and those who are not!" was the rapid retort.

"Will not a peace suffice you?"

"By no means!"

"Then what do you demand?"

"We demand," said the Prince, "a complete settlement of the question which this war has raised."

"What question?" asked the Kaiser.

"Do you mean that you have forgotten it? Why, it is you who have suggested it. You have declared that it is necessary to decide whether England is to be supreme throughout the world! We have never propounded such a point. But as you demand it *shall* be determined, there is nothing left but to determine it."

"Why, sir," exclaimed the embarrassed sovereign, "you speak as a conqueror."

"Nay; that would be premature! I do not wish to be compelled to."

"Your argument is obvious. You contend that we have to settle whether England shall control the affairs of Europe. You are surely not serious. England is not a Continental power!"

"True," replied the Prince shortly, "it is a position we should have owed to you!"

"But do you insist on dominating the world!"

"You misunderstand me," said the Prince. "Let me again review the position. This challenge, thrown out at us we have accepted. You have forced us to take the settlement of European problems in our own hands, or to have our own position s ttled by you. There was no alternative. It is a tremendous task. We have not shrunk from it. These problems shall indeed be settled. There shall be no more questionings. When we have settled them we shall be content to withdraw, but only when we have made it impossible for any selfish power to raise them again. There is but one condition, therefore, of a treaty of peace. It is that you side with England in her task. You must accept her as an arbitrator and support her award. If you do not, it is clear we are still at war."

"And German interest——?"

"German interests, no less than the interests of France Russia, Austria, Turkey, and the remaining countries, are involved in the delicate problem we have to settle. You cannot be exempt. Whether you will gain, or whether you will lose, must necessarily depend upon the general justice of the policy you have pursued."

"But I should prefer to know more of the details of your scheme."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince coldly; "such details I cannot give, even if I would. We must consult America. She is our ally, and has armed herself. I understand that more than three millions of her people are waiting to be carried over to these shores to take their part in the grim preliminaries!"

The Prince of Wales . . held out his hand.

The Emperor paused. He felt his position to be hopeless. Each step made it worse; and what he heard convinced him only the more of the madness of his act and the imperative call for immediate peace.

"Let me understand," he continued at last. "You say that you will withdraw when the guarantees for final peace satisfy you. What guarantee can you deem sufficient?"

"That," observed the Prince, "is no difficult matter. We shall demand immediate and complete . . disarmament."

"But," cried the Kaiser, "who can effect such a consummation?"

"We," was the laconic reply.

"But how, if you are not in arms?"

"It seems," said the Prince, "that England and America will necessarily remain in arms till the end is effected."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the amazed monarch. "Do you ask that we shall lay ourselves bare to an armed foe?"

"You do not trust us yet, it appears," was the Prince's response. "Trust is the prime condition of peace. I regret I have no other terms to offer."

For many long minutes the Kaiser remained wrapped in thought, torn by a thousand cruel perplexities. Yet he could see no issue to them any way. The insuperable power of the British race confronted him. It was hopeless longer to dream of a happy encounter.

And after all could not Britain be trusted? Her history stood behind her: She had ever been the advocate of peace, the champion of liberty. A free, emancipated Europe! It was a strange and inspiring thought! A new era of hope of industry, of progress.

Beyond all came the ominous words of the Chancellor to his mind.

"Peace! Before all things, peace!"

Aye, and not only that. This far-seeing statesman—what had he said as his last exhortation?

"It is better to submit to the generosity of Great Britain than incur her anger."

England was now firm set on her purpose. She must advance to its attainment or be hurled back, crushed. And who could take up this giant's task? Germany? Impossible. But this was not all. Behind England was America. It was the whole race—the race that pervaded the world, that gave to the earth its history and to the sea its speech. Here was a power strong as that of destiny. Not all that remained of mankind could keep back this irresistible people.

Her purpose, too—not one of empire, of ravage, of possession; rather a holy and religious purpose that had for aim the union of the world in one eternal bond of peace. It was the dream of philosophy, the message of science, the yearning of art. In its beneficent light the earth would bloom into new beauty. It was a mission that no brute force or savage hate could stay on its triumphant course.

Such thoughts coursed through the Kaiser's mind. And then, rising suddenly, he exclaimed:

"Prince, I accept your terms. I swear to assist your purpose. Germany shall submit to your award. Henceforth we shall be allies and not foes!"

The Prince of Wales sprang up in eagerness from his chair and held out his hand.

"You have spoken nobly, nephew," he said. "Your trust in us shall not be shaken. Your words have not only saved the fate of Germany: they have saved the fate of the world!"

And in solemn silence, each moved by deep emotion, these two representatives of the great Teutonic nations clasped hands in token of their sacred compact.

CHAPTER L.

How the Parisians Danced.

"We will dance behind our fortifications," wrote the *Gil Blas*. As a mere trope, an idle metaphor, the phrase would serve, but as a description of actual fact it was far from being justified by events.

Paris was not in the least degree jubilant. Although the military spirit of the people was stirred by the sheer necessities of the moment, there were glimpses of rational judgment which showed to thoughtful observers that gay, Lutetia would be herself again when the war had ended and not until then.

The Ministry, in reality tottering to its base, was ostensibly propped up by public opinion.

Now, in an earnest, self-sacrificing, devoted Paris, this would have been impossible. The fierce energy of the citizens would demand rapid success, or equally rapid change. But here a more cynical mood betrayed itself. "These clever fellows got us into this mess," said the city in effect, "let them get us out of it again. They must have every chance of convincing both us and the English that they were not mistaken in bringing about this disastrous war."

This wholly unexpected attitude on the part of the fickle Parisian mob did not reassure the President and M. Hanotaux.

"During the Commune," murmured the head of the State, "a man was in power one week and forgotten the next." And he sighed with the reflection that the last state of that man was better than the first.

"My dear colleague," replied with a smile the fire-eating scientist whose advent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had proved so epoch-making; "Fate is often feline. We are being played with before the moment of immolation."

If the chiefs of the Republic secretly expressed such opinions, who shall describe the loud-mouthed fury of that large class of Parisians whose entire fortunes depended on the gratification of the expensive tastes cultivated by English milords and American honourables and their wives and daughters.

A tremulous wine-merchant . . . . addressed a crowd of customers.

Where was now the Paris hat, where the *gants de suède*? Of what avail were the gowns of Paquin, the dinners of Durand? The hotels and emporia of fashion closed, the large restaurants empty, the Casino mute—the capital of the world *où l'on s'amuse* was indeed desolated.

When a party of wealthy shopkeepers dined at Durand's both proprietor and guests ground their teeth in silent rage as they read the label on the bottle of superior champagne: "The same as supplied to England."

Alas, England was drinking beer, and English ladies

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were wearing goods manufactured in Bradford or Manchester.

The first outbreak of real patriotic feeling sprang tumultuously into existence when the news came that Russia had crumbled into fragments, and that the German Emperor had yielded.

So France was again left to fight on unaided to the bitter close. Why was it always France that must pour forth her blood and her treasure to advance a cause or bolster a theory? Did mankind need teaching the tenets of liberty—France must wade through accumulated horrors to provide the rest of the human race with an object lesson. Did the world require some magnificent demonstration of the art of empire—France again must give her sons and her millions to scrawl the thesis across the face of Europe. And when England, the all-pervading power, grew so arrogant that the rest of the nations panted for elbow-room, the final outcome was that France should be down-trodden to give other malcontents breathing-space.

For a time it seemed that Paris would be true to her traditions, and hold each street as a barricade, and each house as a fort.

But the fever died as quickly as it arose, and by common consent the blame of the situation was placed on the shoulders of the authorities.

Of course politics ran high in the cafés, and the duties of patriotism were proclaimed in flamboyant terms.

"Citizens and brothers," a tremulous wine merchant cried from the celebrated Boulevard Haussmann, as he addressed a crowd of customers, "Paris must be true to her traditions. We must give our last sou, spend our last drop of blood, in defence of these stones hallowed by the footsteps of the pioneers of liberty, equality, and fraternity."

Yet, at a late hour that night, he and his wife hid all their jewellery and the greater part of their money beneath a flagstone which supported the kitchen boiler.

For the truth about the sortie was now leaking out, and even the vainglorious survivors found it necessary to depict the courage of the English in lurid language, if only to enhance the prodigies of valour they had themselves performed. Who should stay such Paladins as the foe?

The President and M. Hanotaux conferred together very seriously when the German Ambassador communicated to them the result of the conversation between the Emperor and the Prince of Wales.

"Are we to expect then," M. Hanotaux said in freezing tones, "that our quondam ally is about to become an active enemy on the eastern frontier, in obedience to this new-found gospel of peace and brotherly love?"

"No, sir," was the dignified reply. "It is no part of His Majesty's programme to turn traitor. His desires were prosecuted in the interests of the German people, but he expressly stipulated that he should be exempted from further co-operation in the war save in the guise of a mediator."

"France has received little help from German arms in this quarrel," was the contemptuous retort. "She wishes none from her diplomacy."

"Will you not follow the example of Germany?" said the Ambassador.

"Never," cried the Frenchmen, speaking together.

The Ambassador then withdrew.

For a little while neither spoke. At last the President said: "My dear colleague, what is to be the end?"

"We must triumph." The words were brave, but the tone was not that of assurance.

"But if we do not? I tell you candidly I fear the worst. Investment of Paris is impossible! I cannot see how any point of the lines is to be forced; yet I tremble. The unbroken successes of the invaders, their indomitable spirit, their carelessness of consequence—above all, the quiet confidence with which Lord Roberts is moving his forces on the west, perplex and sadden me. What if Paris be carried by a *coup de main?*"

"There is always a pistol," was the moody response.

"*Pouf!* You are distracted to make such an answer. I am not speaking of myself, or of you, but of France. What can be done for France?"

"All that is possible. Secure the best terms, and then, for ourselves, *bon jour!*"

Changed, indeed, was the tone of the stout-hearted minister since that council at Versailles in May!

Trains travelling east were crowded.

General Saussier, as became a brave soldier, was more hopeful.

He had 500,000 men under his command, not counting the Garde de Paris and the citizen battalions now doing duty within the walls.

His defences were justly deemed impregnable. His communications south and east of the capital were unimpaired, and he had satisfactorily arranged for a strong corps from Chalons to throw itself in the path of Sir Redvers Buller. He counted upon the English hurling themselves vainly against the circle of forts, while France was collecting her yet magnificent energies for a final effort to crush the persistent foe.

A man of colossal bulk, and unwieldy withal, the French Commander-in-Chief bore charger after charger to the earth whilst he cantered from camp to camp and from battery to battery. When too physically exhausted himself to remain in the saddle he was driven in a landau on his tour of inspection, and he certainly succeeded in impressing officers and men alike with belief in his sagacity and respect for his unflagging energy.

His plans were well laid so far as the tactical distribution of his troops went. Under the most favourable conditions his great opponent must require some hours to move any material section of his army, and in the same time, by keeping strict watch upon the British, General Saussier could bring to bear against them a vastly superior force.

These considerations, backed by the 2,000 splendid cannon that peered through the embrasures of the fortifications, were potent reasons for the hopefulness of the French military chief.

He looked solely at facts. The President and M. Hanotaux thought of principles.

Had he been present at certain midnight drills taking place nightly within the British lines, General Saussier might not have felt so confident.

That the public did not share his views was shown by the actions of many besides the keeper of the *estaminet* in the Boulevard Haussmann. The real reasons were never avowed, but it was surprising to note the numbers of women and children whom their male protectors thought to be suffering from the ill effects of a hot September.

Trains travelling east were crowded with healthy-looking invalids, all of whom had suddenly discovered the marvellous salubrious qualities of the Vosges mountains.

There was disturbance even within the sacred circle of the arts.

So it came to pass that one night, when the peaceful calm of the Tuileries garden was only accentuated by the distant rumbling of commissariat waggons crossing the Pont de la Concorde, a small group of men were busily occupied in digging deeply beneath the trees in a secluded spot.

Long they laboured, and when the trench was ample enough they solemnly interred two heavy packages, securely bound in waterproof cloths, and so cumbrous that they required the united strength of many hands to lower them with ropes into the grave-like receptacle prepared for them.

The diggers were men whose names are famous through-

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out the world, and they were rescuing the Venus de Milo from the dangers that threatened her.

Once before, so goes the legend, has the beautiful Aphrodite descended from her throne in the Louvre and sought obscure safety at the hands of her worshippers. When Prussian shells began to rain on Paris from Chatillon the majestic statue was carefully stowed away in a secret resting-place until siege and occupation were ended.

The painter, musician, and the man of letters foregathered to growl at everything and everybody.

And now the scene was re-enacted—not without due cause. If you doubt the earnestness of these devotees at the shrine of Venus, you should read the inscription on the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum.

When Napoleon took the bronze horses from St. Mark's, in Venice, he was compelled by treaty to restore them. England never gives back that which she has once grasped, and Aphrodite must never gaze with calm self-sufficiency at Phœbus Appollo. So she was hidden for a space beneath the trees of the Tuileries.

Art in the Quartier Latin was not so serious.

Here the painter, the musician, and the man of letters foregathered to growl at everything and everybody. Paris might be hypnotised by the dread of impending evil, but not so the children of Bohemia.

They had found, to their great joy, that at least one proprietor of a restaurant so bubbled over with patriotic ardour that an epigram at the expense of the British meant a free dinner, and a rousing speech, *à la patrie*, sufficed for unquestioned additions to an already surfeited slate.

Thus did Paris fret and fume, and stir uneasily as though in slumber disturbed by fearful dreams, whilst a few miles away on the west the might of Britain assembled in dread and portentous array.

And there was no dancing—not even at the Bal Bullier or the Moulin Rouge.

(To be continued.)

Result of Distribution No. 14.

Two applicants have this week received a sovereign each. They are:

Mrs. E. BURRESS, 19 Jeyes Road, New Brompton.
J. MORETON, Lugwardine, Hereford.

Those who did not apply are:

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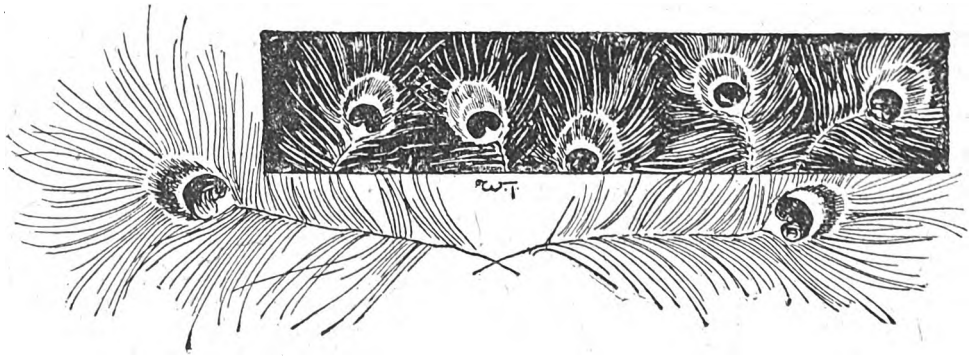

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SHORT TRUTHS.

T. M.—Arctic explorers state that the natives of the regions of snow and ice never attempt to assuage thirst by putting snow into their mouths. If snow is melted, it becomes drinkable water, and relieves thirst as ordinary water does; but if it is allowed to melt in the mouth, it increases the thirst.

V. S.—There are now 58 prisons in England; less than fifty years ago there were 113, so that the number has decreased by practically one-half, despite the increase in population.

W. H. has been puzzled, when reading about Egyptian finance in the newspapers, by the signs £T and £E before the figures; thus, £T200,000. He would like to know what these mean.———They signify that the money is stated in Turkish or Egyptian pounds. The Turkish pound is worth a little more than 18s. of our money, and the Egyptian pound is equal to £1 0s. 3d. These values vary somewhat, according to the rate of exchange.

F.—The largest fire insurance policy in existence is that covering the property of the Santa Fé Railway Company. The amount of the insurance is £1,000,000, and the annual premium is £30,000.

WET.—Some time ago a company was formed in America to loan umbrellas. Subscribers paid a small annual fee, as receipt for which they received a metal ticket. Shops or depôts were opened in various streets, and when a subscriber was caught in a downpour, he only had to call at the depôt and leave his ticket in order to procure a gamp. That was what the company thought, but it usually happened that when the over-confident subscriber was caught in a heavy shower, the nearest call-room was several streets away; as he would have got drenched in reaching the place, he had to do the same as other people, and take shelter in a doorway. So the scheme fell through.

B.—The wholesale prices realised by foreign butters form the best indication of the value set upon them by consumers in this country. The highest prices are obtained by the Danish, Swedish, and Dutch varieties; the prices fluctuating between 105s. to 120s. per cwt.

H. G.—The Swedes pay great attention to the replanting of trees, to compensate for the continual demand upon the timber of their country. Every year the school children plant about 500,000 trees, under the guidance of their teachers. They do not all grow; but those that take root are sufficient to prevent undue denudation of the forests.

R. E. asks: "Is it known how many white elephants have been captured?"———There is no authentic record in black and white; but a celebrated elephant hunter has stated that since the beginning of the Christian era only twenty-four of these animals have been caught.

WILL.—The last will and testament of Shakespeare is kept at Somerset House. It is fixed in a series of frames protected by glass.

J. M.—Athmos, a mountain in Roumelia, is called the Monte Santo, or Holy Mountain, owing to the number of monasteries and hermitages erected upon it. These buildings contain numerous manuscripts of the New Testament that are of great antiquity.

F. L. B. asks: "At what age should a man give up football?"———Some say that a man should not play after the age of thirty; but it is a matter in which everybody has a right to please himself. However, it is courting disaster to play at an age when a breakage may mean a permanent injury.

C. N.—Undoubtedly a large percentage of the crime committed in this country goes unpunished. It is computed that in 55 cases out of 100 the criminals escape the reward of their misdeeds. There are about 40,000 persons under the suspicion of the police—persons known to be thieves, receivers, or otherwise out of the pale of honest society, but there is no evidence that will enable the police to arrest them.

KISS. — Certainly, kissing may be dangerous at times, as when a person is suffering from a throat complaint; but in such cases the common sense of the parties in question should recognise that the osculatory greeting should be abandoned. In Servia they have a custom of kissing deceased friends before burial, and so strongly is the custom rooted in the popular feeling that the common sense of the inhabitants is useless against it. Some years ago there was a serious epidemic of diphtheria due to it, and the authorities had to issue a stringent prohibition. But the regulation evoked such hostility that it was found necessary to limit it to cases of persons who had died from diphtheria. Even the severe lesson of the epidemic did not teach the people to drop the practice in connection with other diseases.

G.—It has been estimated that if the pictures in the National Gallery were sold, they would fetch a million and a half sterling. But they would most probably realise a larger sum, as American and other millionaires would eagerly compete for the possession of certain pictures, which cannot be equalled.

D. K. R. asks: "How can worry kill a man?"———Worry injures beyond repair certain cells of the brain, and the brain being the nutritive centre of the body, the other organs become gradually injured, or a combination of them arises, and death finally ensues.

F. A.—It has been computed that, on the average, an engine-driver travels 20,000 miles a year.

BEGINNER writes: "What would you say was the most common form of accident a cyclist is likely to meet with, and should therefore endeavour to guard against?"———That which is commonly known as "skidding"—the sudden slipping of the tyres along the road—throwing the rider violently on the ground with as much precipitation as when one's feet slip on an ice-slide. It is also one of the most dangerous, for it is impossible to save oneself on such an occasion. You are over before you know where you are. Especially is it dangerous where the traffic is great, for it is more than likely that the rider will be thrown right under the feet of horses and the wheels of passing vehicles. There is a fortune awaiting the inventor who can find means to lessen this danger.

C. P.—The original cost of St. Paul's Cathedral was a million and a half sterling.

S. L.—There is more money made out of the "rag business," as you style it, than you suppose. A ton of old rags is worth something like £10 to a dealer, who pays, perhaps, one-third that sum for it.

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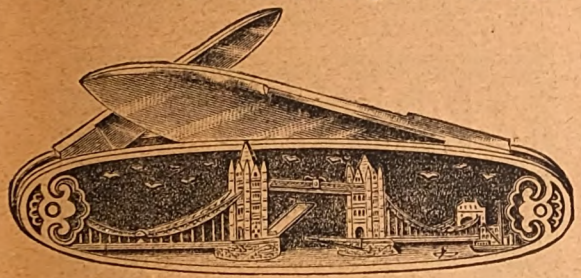

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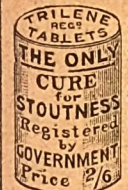

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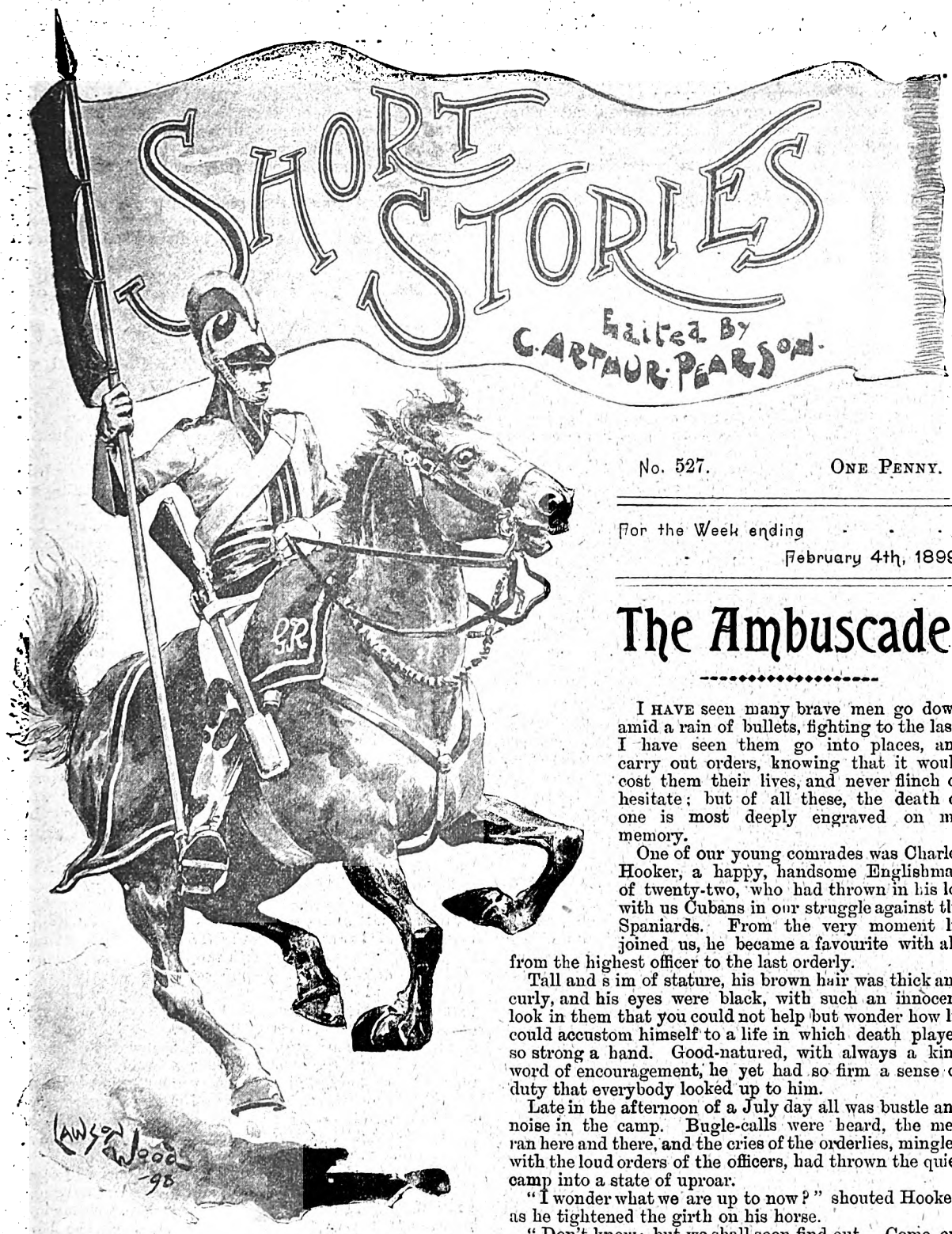

No. 527. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending
February 4th, 1899.

The Ambuscade.

I HAVE seen many brave men go down amid a rain of bullets, fighting to the last. I have seen them go into places, and carry out orders, knowing that it would cost them their lives, and never flinch or hesitate; but of all these, the death of one is most deeply engraved on my memory.

One of our young comrades was Charles Hooker, a happy, handsome Englishman of twenty-two, who had thrown in his lot with us Cubans in our struggle against the Spaniards. From the very moment he joined us, he became a favourite with all, from the highest officer to the last orderly.

Tall and slim of stature, his brown hair was thick and curly, and his eyes were black, with such an innocent look in them that you could not help but wonder how he could accustom himself to a life in which death played so strong a hand. Good-natured, with always a kind word of encouragement, he yet had so firm a sense of duty that everybody looked up to him.

Late in the afternoon of a July day all was bustle and noise in the camp. Bugle-calls were heard, the men ran here and there, and the cries of the orderlies, mingled with the loud orders of the officers, had thrown the quiet camp into a state of uproar.

"I wonder what we are up to now?" shouted Hooker, as he tightened the girth on his horse.

"Don't know; but we shall soon find out. Come on, or you'll be late for formation," I answered, springing into the saddle and trotting down into my place in the line.

Horses were saddled, straps were tightened and accoutrements hastily buckled on. The line was soon formed, and, as we stood at attention while Captain Planas was inspecting us, we were wondering why we were called out at so late an hour; for it was five o'clock, and all of us knew that at that time no danger was to be feared from the enemy.

"Squadron! Right by fours! Column right! March!" rang out in rapid succession, and we walked our horses

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slowly out of the camp, noticing, as we did so, that only two squadrons besides our own were leaving, and that all the impedimenta, together with the rest of the force, remained behind.

Slowly we rode along, and as hunger is not a very good promoter of conversation, it soon lagged, and the silence was broken by the tramp of the horses' hoofs and an occasional remark from one of the men.

Disgust at the prospect of spending a long, cold night without a fire, joined to the gnawing of an empty stomach, had succeeded in throwing me into a wretched humour, and as I rolled over my blanket and answered with a grunt Hooker's cheerful "Good-night" I mentally made a vow to make someone pay for my feelings on the morrow.

Large clouds blew up, and for a moment covered the moon. Some drops of rain began to fall, but still the tired men slept on, Captain Planas alone remaining awake; the responsibility of the ambuscade lay on his shoulders, and, young in command, he felt too anxious to rest.

"Three o'clock," he muttered, as he glanced at his watch. "Sentry, pass the word to wake the men—and no one is to talk," he added, addressing the guard.

"Now, men," he continued, as we hastily sprang to our feet, "you are not to fire until I command, no matter what happens. Fire low and true. Remember that I have pledged my word to capture the convoy, and I know that I can rely on you all. Let each man choose his tree, and, above all, no noise, and await the order; then, aim well, and fire."

Silently the men took their places, and for a moment the click of springs could be heard as we examined our rifles; then, once more all was still.

The first rays of dawn were lightening up the sky when, at the turn of the road, some four hundred yards away, a solitary horseman came in sight—the advance scout of the convoy. Slowly he came on, looking from side to side, his gun shining in his hand.

How handsome and soldierly he looked, I thought, as his horse carefully picked his way along the stony road; at that moment a hundred rifles were probably levelled at him, ready to speed the messengers of death on their way, had prudence not forbidden a movement.

Nearer and nearer he came, behind him could be seen some one hundred men—the vanguard.

Already the first horseman was abreast of the ambush. Would he see us? If so, all was lost. We could hear the creaking of his accoutrements as he almost brushed against us. Now the main body was in sight; in the midst of them could be seen twenty or thirty pack mules —the coveted convoy.

I glanced at Hooker at my side. His patient manner never seemed to abandon him, but the colour that came and went on his fair cheeks, together with a hasty look which now and then he cast at our captain, told me that, although he could control his feelings, he was as impatient as I for the fight to begin. All knew that the moment for action was fast approaching.

There was the tramp, tramp of the troops as, with a steady shuffle, on they advanced.

My blood rushed to my head, a choking sensation seized my throat. I held my breath lest it should betray our presence. I could feel every pulse in my body throb as, crouched behind a tree, I aimed and awaited the signal.

Still on they came. Twenty feet away was the commanding officer, his eyes and ears on the alert. Would the order never come?

At last! "Fire!" and the roar of three hundred rifles rent the air, re-echoing through the woods; the shouts of the officers and surprised men, the clatter of hoofs, and the sharp notes of the bugle, threw the peaceful scene of a moment before into the confusion and noise of battle.

At the first volley the enemy gave way; but now they rallied and returned our fire. It was give and take, and I knew that we were in for a hard, stubborn fight.

A square was formed by the Spaniards, in the middle of which were placed the loaded mules. As fast as one went down his carcass was dragged to the front, and soon a rampart was formed, from behind which the enemy knelt and fired.

The order had been given by Captain Planas, and we had closed in, completely surrounding the square.

Side by side Hooker and I fought, and as I occasionally caught sight of him through the smoke I saw him firing, his hat off and his cheeks rosy with the excitement of battle.

On all sides men went down; some lay still, while others writhed and groaned in frightful agony, calling on their more fortunate companions to end their misery; while in the midst calmly stood Captain Planas, bending now and then to soothe a wounded soldier, urging and encouraging his men, unmindful of his own safety.

Cries of derision and defiance came from the square, answered by similar ones from us.

Suddenly a shout went up. Over-confident, Captain Planas had advanced too near; a bullet had struck him in the breast, and he fell, calling on us to avenge him.

Dismayed at our loss, we hesitated, and began to yield; a panic seemed to seize us, and death, of which we had not thought before, now appeared in all its horror.

The Spaniards, seeing our condition, took courage, nd poured their deadly volleys into our ranks. Defeat and disgrace stared us in the face; the battle seemed lost. But the tide of the fray was turned by Hooker.

Grasping Cuba's torn and tattered flag of victory in one hand, his machete in the other, this young Briton called on the men to follow him, and looking neither to the right or left, he dashed headlong into the square.

The men, amazed as they were by his bravery, obeyed by one common impulse, and horrible carnage ensued.

In the midst of the square stood the young Englishman the blood running down his face from a cut on his forehead, his eyes shining with the light of a brave man who fears not death, but dishonour.

In his hand he still held the flag for which he was dying, while with his machete he kept at bay a burly Spaniard who cut and slashed at him.

All around men fought and fell; the weakest heart grew strong and the hand struck true as the men gazed on the brave young fellow who was now leading them.

Like wild beasts we fought, well-nigh exhausted by our efforts, and desperate at the loss of our captain.

The onslaught was too strong to resist; the enemy broke and ran. The day was won.

But how much had it cost us! For as I looked I saw Hooker standing for a moment amid the dead and dying, a ray of light, as it stole through the smoke, lighting up his pale but happy face. Slowly he sank back, the flag pressed to his bosom, and, as with uncovered head I knelt by his side, he smiled and passed away.

That night we sadly laid him to rest, wrapped in the flag for which he braved death and died.

M. R. Dennis.

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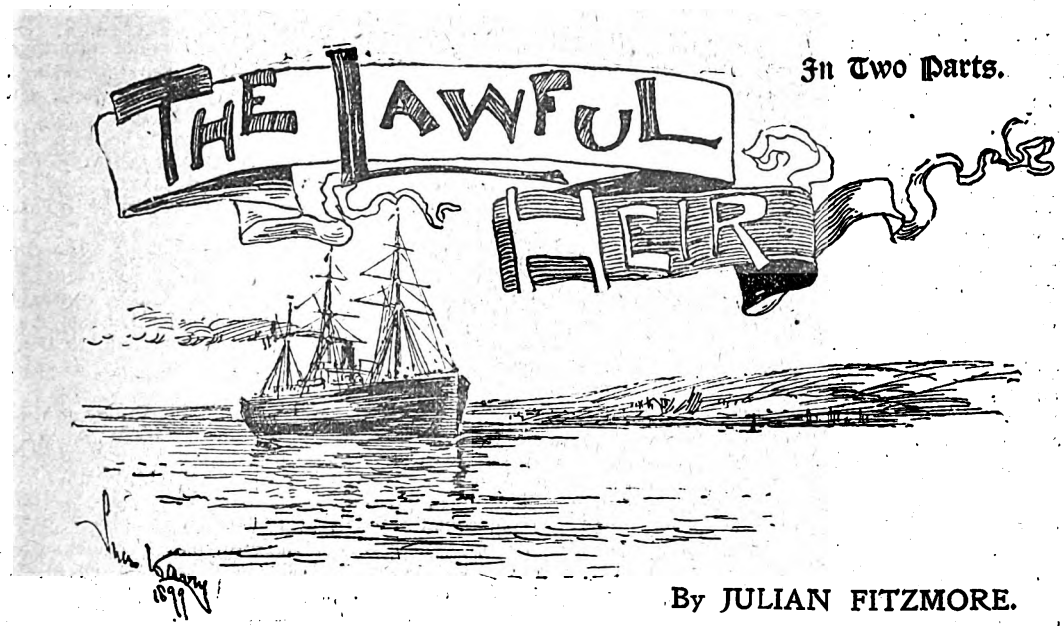

In Two Parts.

By JULIAN FITZMORE.

CHAPTER I.

Far Away from Home.

IN a log cabin in the backwoods of America sat one warm summer's evening a man, with a youth of nineteen years or so by his side. It was quite in the doorway of the cabin that they sat, for the day had been one of Canada's very hottest, and scarcely a breath of air was to be obtained, so sultry had it been for many hours. The shade of the porch was therefore extremely comforting and refreshing to these two who had toiled vigorously during the day in the Canadian forest at their regular work of lumbermen.

It was hard, trying work, that of a lumberman and a backwoodsman. For above nineteen years had the elder man, now probably fifty years of age, been engaged in it, and though the life was healthy enough, yet one with only a fragile constitution at the start, and whose previous life had not been such as to fit him for this work, the labour endured for so long had in the end begun to tell. The elder man, therefore, was going grey, and had the worn face and general tired look that one associates usually with a premature ending of life. Of late these symptoms had been more than previously plain, even to the man himself.

When he had first arrived, nearly twenty years ago, from the north of England, at that Canadian spot, utterly alone except for the dear girl who had accompanied him from London as his wife, he had had great hopes of the happiness that was in store for him, and had looked with all a young husband's joyful anticipations at the long future stretching before him in the society and friendship of one he so loved. And Carla, his wife, had returned his love with interest, and had as bright ideas of the future, and of the happiness she would make for him, as ever wife had in this world. They were wholly absorbed in each other, and they knew what each had given up for the other. For it had been a case of mutual self-sacrifice, though the man had given up by far the most.

Conrad Walker, for so he now called himself, had belonged to a family of high reputation in his native land, and had, being the only son, been the heir to all its tithes, dignities, and income. But when he fell in love with Carla Hanley, the daughter of a retired merchant of Clapham, and announced his intention of marrying her, the anger of his parents knew no bounds, and he was threatened with all sorts of pains and penalties if his foolish ideas, as they termed them, were persisted in.

Well, Conrad was just one of that sort to persist in such a case. Though his bodily strength was slight, and his health only delicate, especially at that time, his determination and mental ability were by no means small; and when he was thus so strongly opposed, it only made him the more resolute.

"You'll leave here," had said his father, after an angry interview; "you'll leave here, sir, at once if you marry that girl. And more than that; there are some things I can't hinder you having; but I can hinder you having my wealth, which is my own, and what is more I will, for I swear you shall never touch a penny of it if you carry out your absurd proposal. You, who could marry half the eligible ladies in the land, to go and throw yourself away on a bit of a retired grocer's daughter! I'm too ashamed, sir, to say more. You must take your choice, and if you don't please me, you go out of my house for ever, at least, whilst I live."

And Conrad didn't please him, and went. He and Carla got married and went out to Canada.

"We're better there, Carla," he had told her in London. "No one will know us, as no one will know where we have gone. It will be a nine days' wonder, my disappearance, and the papers will talk about it for a time, but it will soon cease, and we meantime shall have ourselves and our love. As for titles and estates, well, nobody gets to Heaven any sooner for a title that ever I heard of, and if thousands of acres of forest in Canada are not estates enough I don't know what is."

So they went and were satisfied. The story of the romantic marriage, of the mysterious disappearance

of bride and bridegroom, of the anger of the latter's parents, interested England for some days, then gradually passed away from most people's memories.

And when Carla gave to Conrad their first little baby-boy their bonds of love were complete. It was with such a smile that she looked at her husband the first time he held the babe in his arms, and said:

"What shall we call him, Conrad?"

And the man answered gravely:

"'William,' my dear, at any rate. Every first-born of our family is a 'William' as I am; though now disguised with my new name."

The dark eyes of the mother looked lovingly on her boy.

"Yes, it must be 'William,'" she said. Then, after a pause, "Shall you ever tell him, Conrad, who he really is as he grows up?"

The husband looked thoughtful.

"Not so far as I think at present," replied he. "There may be circumstances demanding it, but, after all, happiness is the greatest thing in life, and if one is happy, what does it matter whether he is a backwoodsman or the heir to——"

And he laughed.

"You are happy, Conrad?" she asked.

"Perfectly, little one," said he. "I have never repented our coming here."

"Nor I, my love."

And that home happiness went on so serenely and beautifully till that dark day five years later when Carla, after a brief attack of pneumonia, passed from the world's happiness to the fuller happiness above, and left Conrad alone with the boy, sorrowful and heart-broken.

It took him a long time to get over the blow. Had it not been for thoughts of that young boy he would probably not have got over it at all. But the necessity of keeping up and looking after William, gave him strength, and at last time gradually softened the effects of the ruthless shock.

And William had grown and grown, year by year, till here he was at nineteen, tall and strong beyond his years, for the Canadian climate takes some beating for bracing one up.

But for some time now the father had felt his own strength failing, and with this came the serious question, oft-debated, as to whether he ought to tell his son of what was really his position and right, or whether it would be better to leave him in blissful ignorance, to go on, and spend his life in Canada, as he himself had intended him doing, before the death of the mother made all go wrong, so to speak.

It was a severe struggle, and was not easily decided. Perhaps a change of air would do even himself good. So he decided, as he sat by the boy's side on this summer evening, that he would have a holiday. He would go for a week or two to England and take the boy with him. It would be some consolation to feel that his son had looked over those estates which were now in another's possession, for his own father had died, so he had learnt from English papers, some years ago, and his mother, too; and another, a distant cousin, had come into that which should rightly have been his. Ay, and that which was his yet, if he only cared to claim it! And with this thought arose the oft-recurring question, as to whether he was acting rightly in keeping his son out of his due.

But he had now determined. He would go and see how things were going, and how all looked after this twenty years of absence. Nobody would recognise him or know his son. He could sleep and stop in the little county town itself without any fear of that, and he would benefit by his native air, no doubt.

Having finally made up his mind he spoke to the boy at his side, whilst he lovingly stroked the wavy chestnut hair, so exactly like what *hers* had been.

"William," said he, "would you like to go to England for a holiday?"

The boy's eyes gleamed, as he took his father's hand. "Oh, dad, it would be splendid! So grand to see London, and the Queen, and the Abbey, and all those lovely places you've so often told me all about. And the pretty house where you used to live, dad, in Durham, was'nt it, you said? Oh, I should like it, and no mistake!"

"Right you are, my boy," said his father, more gaily than he had done for some time. "We'll go, William; it will do me good, I daresay."

And a fortnight later the steamship *Umbria*, from New York, carried two passengers, whose berths had been taken comparatively late, booked for Liverpool. And more than one of those on board remarked on the close friendship, love, and resemblance that existed between the father and the son.

CHAPTER II.

The Honourable Eva Porton.

PORTON LODGE was situated some five or six miles north of the river Tees, which, as everyone knows, forms the boundary line between the counties of Durham and Yorkshire. It was an ideal stately home of the English aristocracy, going back in its chief building and design to the time of Henry VII., though it had had so many alterations and improvements made in it during the Elizabethan period that most people, at first sight, would have taken it for an Elizabethan house.

The building was of red brick, and on the front formed three sides of a large square, the centre part of which was occupied by a large fountain and well-laid-out flower beds, encircled by a wide carriage drive. In front of this square the ground sloped gradually down, facing the park, over which the eye ranged in a splendid view for miles, passing over the country, and finally resting on the large industrial town five miles away, where black smoke and dark sky indicated the never-ceasing energy of commerce.

Yet all was so tranquil and peaceful, so suggestive of rest and beauty in this domain of Porton Lodge, that it seemed scarcely possible to realise the nearness of that place to the town already spoken of. Far more in keeping was it with the old country town of Wellcaster, seen from the back of the house, at a distance of only two miles. Wellcaster was an ideal English country town, with all the usual concomitants of that factor of agricultural life. To-day, being market day, its chief street, about five or six yards wide, was filled with stalls of all kinds, whose proprietors were ready to do business in any shape or form. There was, besides, a horse or two for disposal; and some half-dozen cows, lying leisurely in the cobble-paved roadway, were also for sale, if anyone wished to buy.

Amidst all this busy and picturesque scene, the waggonette which run every market day between the industrial town and Wellcaster, came lumbering heavily into the market square. It was so usually empty that

the spectacle of two passengers, with a fair amount of luggage, would have been sufficient to draw universal attention, had it not chanced that at that very moment the "hall carriage," as it was called, with the Honourable Eva Porton inside, had drawn up just before the door of The Bull, and the footman had descended from his perch, resplendent in yellow livery, to go inside the inn on some business of his master's. The waggonette, whose rendezvous was The Bull, drew on one side till the carriage had left.

The young lady inside the carriage saw the motion, and standing up whispered to the coachman to pull to the other side of the street, so as to let the waggonette come to its accustomed position. A lifting of the hat, and a profound bow from each of the two passengers of the waggonette, together with a "Thank you, madam," suggested to the lady herself that, despite their tanned countenances and evident familiarity with hard work, the visitors appeared above the average rank of country trippers.

She mentioned the subject to her father, the Earl, as they sat at dinner.

On their side it must be confessed that the young lady had very favourably impressed Mr. Conrad Walker and Mr. William Walker, for my readers will have guessed that the two passengers and our two Canadian visitors were identical. The beautiful, fairy-like girl of eighteen years, with her laughing brown eyes, her golden hair, and her plain yet charming white muslin dress, looked as pretty as any English girl possibly could, which is saying much.

But hers, as was evident to the two visitors, was not only a physical beauty; there was a beauty of even a higher range still in Eva Porton's face and figure—the beauty of a genial, happy smile; the beauty of perfect health and enjoyment; the beauty of trying to do good and help those who were not so well off as herself. And never had she looked better, or more lovely, than she did on this September day when first the eyes of William Walker—William "Porton"—had she and he only known, met her.

"Who is the young lady in the carriage?" asked Mr. Walker, the elder gentleman, of the ostler at the inn, as that worthy proceeded to take charge of the luggage.

"That's the lady from the Lodge, sir, the Honourable Eva Porton," whispered the ostler, as if half afraid she might hear him. "And a wonderful good'un she is, too, sir," he added.

"Well-liked?" queried the backwoodsman.

"I should just think so, indeed," said the other. "Folks half worship her. You see she's so vastly different from the ——, I mean from some in the family," muttered he apologetically, as if recalling to mind that discretion is often advisable.

"You mean the Earl?" asked the elder man, with a curious smile, and half hesitation, as he pronounced the last word.

The ostler gave a sickly grin and nodded; then, fearing he might be lured to further imprudence if he stayed, hurried off to attend to business, whilst the two visitors gave another look at the young lady, whose carriage, the footman's business being now concluded, was preparing to drive away.

The Hon. Eva Porton, on her part, had stolen more than one surreptitious look at the manly faces of the two strangers, and had seemed to find an especial interest in the tall, well-made form and face of Mr. William, if one might judge by her repeated glances at him. And through the whole of that day, though there were many things that occupied her mind, and many duties to which she had to give close attention, yet somehow or other there was constantly looming before her mental eyes, as she sat up in the dainty boudoir that overlooked the country town, the figure of a tall youth of about twenty years of age, grave, yet with keen, honest, dark eyes, and that bold, fearless look on his face which has won so many battles, and conquered so many foes, both in love and war. Eva Porton was wondering who the stranger was, and who the gentleman with him, evidently his father, was, and how she could learn their identity without disclosing her own interest.

How many women have studied this question in the history of the world?

She mentioned the subject to her father, the Earl, as

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they sat at dinner that evening, in a sort of casual way, after a question of his had nicely paved the way for it.

The Earl of Aldergate was not at all like his daughter, either in face or disposition. A hard, grasping man, with a very haughty mien, and a sort of "Don't you know I'm somebody particular?" air about him; and there were very few people amongst his acquaintances, and fewer still amongst his dependents, who cared for the Earl of Aldergate or for his wife either. He had come into the title and estates some fifteen years ago, when, after an interval of waiting, and no claimant appearing, on the death of the old Earl, on behalf of the only son William Porton, who had left home and never since been heard of, there seemed no reasonable ground for further belief that he or his heirs were living.

The present Earl had been a distant cousin, living in the extreme South of England, and never by any chance visiting the family in Durham; hence he had only once seen the missing William Porton, and that was when the latter was a child. At first, on coming to Wellcaster to Porton Lodge, he had done so with much pleasure, yet with some anxiety and misgiving, as there was no knowing when the missing heir might turn up and dispute his claim to the succession only too well.

But now that fifteen years, or nearly that, had passed by, these fears had long since gone, and his Lordship was now in no dread of that which had formerly cost him so many sleepless hours. He was in power, a landlord and a county man to be feared, and he knew it, and gave men occasion to fear him rather than to love him.

In this he was ably seconded by his wife, who was his second spouse, the Hon. Eva Porton being his only child by his first wife, who had died some years ago. There were no children by this second marriage, though Lady Aldergate had two sons by her first husband, one of whom—Herbert Blair—was not far from being the same age as Eva, being, in fact, some six months older. But none of these were at all in favour with the Wellcastrians or their neighbours, except the Hon. Eva herself.

All this and much more the two travellers learnt, by judicious inquiries, that night from the landlord of The Bull.

"She's a dear, Miss Eva, she is," repeated that worthy for the tenth time. "Why, bless you, gentlemen, you should have seen how she looked after old Mrs. Bridgeman at the lodge when the old soul had the fever, and how she spent the whole day after the colliery explosion last year, in going about helping and comforting the poor families whose sons and fathers had been killed or hurt. Didn't people bless her! And they do say"—here mine host lowered his voice—"as her father, the Hearl, who thinks the world of her, though he is not vastly loved himself, made a regular row with her about her doing such dangerous things, he called them, as bothering in fevers and such like. But she only laughed, and said she'd take no harm! Eh, bless you, she's a good 'un, and a regular Durhamite!"

Almost at the same time the Earl was saying, at dinner, "Anything new in Wellcaster to-day, Eva? I could not ride over there myself."

And the girl laughed—did she blush just a little?—as she replied,

"Oh, yes, great news for Wellcaster, papa! Two strangers came up to The Bull to stay a few days, I suppose, whilst Wilkins was in there. Oh, yes, Wellcaster will be busy."

"With their tongues, I suppose, of course!" said the Earl. "The strangers were only tourists, I expect!"

"I should think so," she said. "Two gentlemen, rather good-looking, I thought."

"Eva always talks of 'good looks,' instead of 'high-breeding,'" put in the Countess. "Really, if everyone were judged by their looks ——"

"Well, Eva, is young yet, my dear," said the Earl, who saw a cloud gathering, and hastened to try and stop its bursting.

"I'm aware of it," said the Countess, "and I hope she'll soon get settled and become wiser."

CHAPTER III.

An Adventure at the Church.

S has been stated, the Countess of Aldergate, second wife to the Earl, as he was her second husband, was not well liked in the district of Wellcaster. In fact, if the truth must be fully stated, she was very much disliked. The Earl himself had never succeeded in really gaining the affections of his tenants and neighbours, as other earls had before him. His disposition was not of that conciliatory mood which wins the respect of the inferiors for their superior in position, and makes them forget difference of rank, position, and circumstances in fellow-feeling for the man.

But the Countess was more than unpopular, she had many active enemies. And it must be confessed that she herself had made them so. From her first coming to Porton Lodge, on the accession of the Earl to his new dignity, she, who had only then been married to him for less than a year, at a time when she had had little idea of ever becoming a countess, since everybody expected that the real Earl would one day turn up, took upon herself to alter and change things and people which had been connected with the ancestral home of the Portons for more years than could readily be told.

There is nothing that sooner gains the ill-will, and dislike of old-fashioned country people, than to see some new upstart come and completely upset all their methods of procedure for years past; and if even the innovations be both more useful and practical than the older things they supplant, yet the country folk fail to grasp the beauty of the change, or its usefulness. But when it arises merely from pride, or from whim, there is apt to be a good deal more said than the delinquent would care to hear.

And Lady Aldergate had done all this, and gained the eternal disfavour of the Wellcastrians. Moreover, they had not forgotten the day when her Ladyship's carriage had run over little Tommy Wilkins, the son of Widow Wilkins, in the High-street, and when just as the coachman was going to pull up to see if the little fellow was badly hurt, her Ladyship had put out her head to beg him to drive on, and not keep her waiting there. And as her carriage rolled away down the High-street towards Porton Lodge, two miles away, there came into the market square a young lady on horseback, attended by a groom, who in obedience to his mistress's orders, assisted her to alight.

And the crowd, who had lately half hissed the Countess of Aldergate, gave a loving greeting to the Honourable Eva Porton, as she followed the man carrying Tommy Wilkins to his mother's house, and did not leave till she had seen that all had been done for him that possibly could be.

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It was the repetition of such acts as the above that had made her Ladyship's name received with anything but favour amongst the people of Wellcaster.

The two strangers from Canada heard all about it from the landlord and landlady of The Bull. The latter was as vehement in her dislike of the Countess and her sons as she was strong in her approval of the Hon. Eva.

"Two impident brazened lads as ever you need want to see, Sir, they are," said the worthy woman, addressing Mr. Walker. "If cheek and impertinence, to say nothing of pride, can get anything, they, like their mother, are going to have it. Why, I have heard say as how"—and here the hostess dropped her voice—"as how her Ladyship is trying to bring about a engagement between her eldest son, Mr. William Blair, and the Earl's daughter! If impidence can go farther than that, I'll have nothing for it. Why, Mr. William isn't fit to take her shoes off, he isn't, let alone to be her husband! Eh, me, it wor a sad day that the young Earl—I mean Mr. William Porton, as would have been the Earl—went away, and was never heard of again. I can just nicely remember him myself, and a grand lad he wor; everybody liked him. You know the tale about him, I suppose?"

The oldest of her two auditors acknowledged, hesitatingly, that he had heard it. Then, pausing, he asked, "And what finally became of him?"

"Well," went on the landlady, "nobody ever knew any more. It was rumoured he had been drowned at sea; and, again, that he had been killed by Indians in 'Merica. Anyhow, the old Earl and Countess never knew more before they died; they always thought he must have been drowned, as was stated, in crossing with his wife to 'Merica. As for her, nobody knew anything further. . . . What we should have done with the new Earl's family but for Miss Eva I can't tell. She's the one real 'scion' of the Portons, as my man, Timothy, calls her—one chip of the good old block. And she's so good and sweet that it makes me wild to think of that old woman thinking she ought to marry that bragging muff of a Master William Blair. It's simply shocking to think of it. But there's one good thing—there's no fear of it's happening; Miss Eva will have a word or two to say about that. And they do say that, though the Earl always has to give way to what her Ladyship thinks and wants, yet in this he is very strict—that there's to be no interference with Miss Eva's tastes and ways. Her ways are not her stepmother's, and he knows it. Well, it's something to his credit, anyhow."

On Sunday, Mr. Conrad Walker and Mr. William Walker attended service at the church of the country town. By this time all Wellcaster knew fully who they were, and where they came from, or thought it did—which is about the same for gossiping purposes. It was confidently asserted that they were South African merchants who had made a fortune, and were travelling through England to see the sights. And, of course, Wellcaster included itself amongst the sights!

Mr. William Walker did not disguise from himself, as he sat in the pew into which the verger had directed him and his father, that he was looking somewhat eagerly for the possible advent of his "fair lady" of the previous week; and that, when the family party arrived from Porton Lodge, his gaze was much more turned towards them than towards the clergyman.

Yes, she was there—as beautiful a girl as ever Heaven's sunlight rested upon; and she walked up the aisle so modestly, so unconsciously graceful in every motion and step, that the elder man, looking upon her, acknowledged what a queen she was, and did not wonder

She walked up the aisle so modestly.

that his son blushed, as he half stole glances at her fair form. She could not herself, of course, help noticing the strangers from her pew, which overlooked all the church, and so it was left to Mr. William's imagination to wonder what she thought.

When the service was over they met, by accident, outside in the country churchyard, the Earl's family and the two visitors. Eva carried her own prayer-book and hymn-book; it had been her gift from her own mother many, many years ago, and she valued it highly. What the cause might have been, she could not say—even in after years she declared laughingly it was a pure accident—but just as Mr. Walker and his son passed the girl, her prayer-book fell upon the path.

Probably it may have arisen from that agitation which does attack every daughter of Eve, however calm otherwise, at the sight of the man she loves; probably it may have been that her grasp of it was not as firm as usual; anyhow, it fell. And William Blair on the one side, and William Walker on the other side, both bent to pick it up, whilst the Countess looked round in half-disguised annoyance at what she called Eva's

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"carelessness," and the elder tourist smiled gaily as he saw his son reach hold of the little book ere his rival could touch it.

The girl took back her prayer-book, as the young man offered it with raised hat, with her sweetest smile, and William Walker's heart beat a shade quicker. She thanked him gently, so gently and sweetly—what a wonderfully sweet voice she had—for his kindness, whilst Mr. William Blair looked daggers at him.

"Eva, are you coming or not?" petulantly asked the Countess. "Why do you stand bothering there?"

"Because I have no right to be discourteous, mamma," said the girl. And with another smile at Mr. Walker, she went on.

"I don't know, Eva," said Mr. Blair, as they turned into Porton Park, "whatever you see in such low people as yon tourists to thank them so effusively for what I should call 'blooming impertinence.' I should have picked up your book; he'd no need to have touched it."

"You may call it what you please," said the Hon. Eva gaily. "I call it kind and gentlemanly, and from the little I have seen and heard of these two gentleman in Wellcaster, they seem to me to be anything but low, and certainly not impertinent."

"Indeed," said Mr. Blair sarcastically, "indeed! I did not know you had taken them up amongst your friends! Perhaps we shall be having them as guests at your garden-party next Wednesday!"

"Perhaps you will," retorted the girl, stung by the insult as to almost forget what she was saying. "And if they were here, there would be two *gentlemen* more" —with an accent on the "gentlemen,"—"at any rate."

With which parting salute the young lady left him, and went to her own room.

The Countess said a few words to Miss Porton later on, on the same subject, not in a motherly way, but in a domineering, sneering manner. To her Eva returned much the same reply. "I knew," said her Ladyship, "I knew what it would be, and how you would receive my advice, Eva! I cannot, of course, make you do what I want, but I think you might consider what is due to me, due to the Porton family, before you put a slight on my son before strangers! And as to the garden-party, well, you'll do as you like, I suppose?"

"With father's permission I shall invite my friends, your Ladyship," replied the girl, "and you need not be afraid that either due deference will fail to you, or that the honour and pride of the Portons will suffer in my selection of guests for my birthday."

Of course the Hon. Eva Porton had never intended such a thing as inviting the two tourists, to whom she had not even been formally introduced, but when the Hon. Captain Jackson and Mrs. Jackson asked leave to bring two gentlemen friends with them, whom they were sure Lord and Lady Porton and the Hon. Eva Porton would be glad to know, the answer was naturally, "With pleasure," and so, to Eva's surprise, as well as inward joy, the next Thursday saw the two visitors at Porton Lodge.

CHAPTER IV.

The Garden Party.

THE Countess of Aldergate and the Hon. Eva Porton stood at the entrance of the hall of Porton Lodge receiving the guests who were invited to celebrate the eighteenth birthday of the younger lady. Some dozens had already arrived, and been welcomed. But the two visitors who were coming as friends of Captain and Mrs. Jackson had not yet put in an appearance, and Miss Eva stood somewhat eagerly watching for the arrival of their party. The Countess would much rather have preferred not having to welcome two "plebian fellows," as she had styled them in talking with her son, but needs must. She flattered herself that she was, after all, a lady and a member of the aristocracy, with whom all show of illwill or dislike was, to say the least, "bad form."

So having to make the best of a distasteful job, she had resolved to welcome them effusively as friends of the Jacksons, and then to monopolise Mr. Conrad Walker as much as possible for the rest of the afternoon. He must be exceedingly close and clever, she thought, if she, the Countess of Aldergate, could not get something out of him in the way of news or family matters that would repay her trouble, and serve to discourage the growing attraction that Miss Eva was finding in the younger man.

Strange to relate, though the usually sharp lady of Porton Lodge both felt and knew that some mystery attached to these two visitors, for whose stay week after week at The Bull she could find no adequate reason, seeing that Wellcaster's charms and attractions were soon gone over by most visitors, it never struck her at all to even think of the true solution. Years and years ago she had given up the idea of the real heir of Porton ever turning up again. She had made up her mind that he had died, childless, long ago, and years of unmolested possession with her husband of the estates and titles had only confirmed this view. So that the true solution of the mystery hanging around her two guests never presented itself to her mind.

They arrived at last, in company with the Jacksons, and were duly introduced by the latter to the Earl and Countess, as well as to the Hon. Eva Porton. The Earl received his guests in a quiet, gentlemanly way, as was to be expected from him. Even if he was not all that former holders of the title had been, yet his bearing on such occasions as this was beyond reproach.

As a garden party, with afternoon tea, the affair was a great success. Mr. Conrad Walker sauntered along the paths with a strange and curious feeling. All these scenes were so familiar to him, though it was twenty years ago since he had known them. How many times he had stood on that terrace, just as he stood now, and thought with pride upon the noble destiny that was before him, and upon the good he would try to do when, after his father's death, he should become Earl of Aldergate! All those walks in the shrubberies where he had, in younger days, played "hide and seek" with his nurse, and, when older, had paced with his school-book in his hand, vainly endeavouring to fix his mind on Roman History instead of cricket, he knew only too well again!

Those were happy days whilst they lasted. And then had come the separation, when, falling in love with Carla, his father and mother proving so obstinate, he had left them in anger to try his fortune in the New World, and discarded title and estates for ever, as he thought.

And he sighed deeply, so much so that the Countess, who was walking with him, rallied him on his gloominess and taciturnity.

"I beg your Ladyship's pardon for my forgetfulness," he said. "I was thinking of one of my old home-scenes, and how like to this it is."

Then ere she could reply, he motioned to a walk in

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the garden where his son and Miss Eva were strolling together, both looking thoroughly happy, and said:

"Let us go down there, and see how they are enjoying themselves, if you don't object. Ah, your Ladyship, enjoyment is not difficult when the heart is young and knows no cares!"

As they came up to the younger ones, they saw Eva smiling gaily at something William had said.

"You seem to be enjoying yourself here, Eva," said the Countess, rather sarcastically, "but you must not neglect your other guests."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Porton," said the young cavalier, bowing gracefully, "I had, in my selfishness, and the pleasure of your company, forgotten there were other guests. May I lead you back to the terrace?"

She took the offered arm, and they returned up the garden-walk.

"So you think you would like our Canadian life?" asked he, for it was that he had previously been describing to her.

"Oh, it must be splendid," she replied enthusiastically. "I am so fond of horses and of the woods, you know."

"We shall be very glad to entertain you if you care to come over any time for a holiday," said the youth, with a bright smile and a blush. "I think we can promise you some good sights."

"When are you thinking of returning, Mr. Walker?" she asked. And the eager listener would have detected a shade of quavering in her voice.

"Oh, I can't say yet, Miss Porton," he answered. "It depends on dad. But," and unconsciously he lowered his voice and spoke so gently, as she afterwards remembered, "I shall be very sorry to leave England—to leave this district."

"I shall be very sorry to leave England—to leave this district.

And even her maiden and aristocratic modesty gave way before her womanly curiosity and innate pleasure, as she asked with averted face,

"Shall you? Why, may I ask?"

He turned quickly, gave her a quiet look, such a look as always pierces to a woman's heart, and then replied with tremulous accents,

"Miss Porton, n ed you ask why?"

And as she silently withdrew her arm from his, they passed on the terrace amongst the other guests. Yet a great and fierce joy had taken possession of her heart, and she whispered with delight all through the day, "He loves me."

Many people made remarks on the loveliness and brightness of their young hostess that afternoon, and many also spoke with much pleasure of the two Canadian visitors, whose gracious manners and manly speech won all hearts.

"Do you know, Richard," said Mrs. Jackson to her husband as they drove home, after depositing their friends at The Bull, "I have such a feeling on looking at Mr. Conrad Walker's face that somehow I have seen it before. His son, too, gives me the same impression. And their very voices seem familiar."

"That is a feeling one often has, my dear," replied her husband, "with those one meets in various places. I quite understand it, though I am afraid it is only a feeling here, seeing that it is impossible you should

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have known Mr. Walker anywhere before, as he has lived in Canada all his life, I understand."

"Do you know anything more about him beyond Briggs saying he was a man of good position and fairly well-to-do?" persisted Mrs. Jackson.

Briggs was the Wellcaster solicitor, whose family, in the lawyer line, was almost as old and respected in the county as was the Earl of Aldergate's. And as it may be stated here that Mr. Conrad Walker had paid more than one visit to Mr. Briggs, it may be assumed that the lawyer knew of what he was talking, when he had introduced his client to Mr. Jackson as a man of "position and well-to-do."

"I know from what Briggs said," went on Mr. Jackson in reply to his wife, "that Mr. Walker is a man worth knowing, I can tell you. The lawyer speaks enthusiastically of him as a gentleman and a business-man."

"Well, of course, I can't say," persisted the lady; "but the face and voice, especially in certain circumstances, seem intensely familiar to me, and yet I can't think whom they resemble. But did you see Miss Eva's decided preference for young Walker's company? I noticed it particularly. And I also observed the looks of disgust and gloominess upon the countenance of Mr. William Blair."

"I can't say I noticed it," remarked the gentleman. "Eva was all the same with everybody, as far as I saw."

"Oh, was she? Richard, it's surprising to me where you men put your eyes! Now, just mark my words. Eva Porton is in love with this young Mr. Walker, and he is in love with her. There'll be bad blood between him and Mr. Blair yet, you'll see. For everyone knows what the Countess and her son are planning."

Then Mrs. Jackson, who had been thinking, resumed.

"The Earl would never give his consent, you may be sure; her Ladyship would see to that. And the Portons are high-spirited. Even his Lordship is, if he were not so much under her dominion. Eva has her grandfather's spirit, who was more like a Porton than even the late Earl. There may be a noise yet in the family about this affair, for Miss Eva is not likely to give way to the Countess's wish about her marriage. We might have another elopement, or some such thing, as that of twenty years ago."

"Oh, dear, Matilda, how you do talk and imagine!" said Mr. Jackson, with a loud laugh.

But the words "elopement" and "twenty years ago" had set the lady thinking. And what she thought may be judged from the incredulous smile which slowly crossed her face as fancy thoughts flitted through her mind, till at last a broad smile rested there, and an involuntary "Oh," was ejaculated.

"What is it now?" queried her husband lazily.

"Nothing," said she, "I was only thinking."

And a smile rested on her face as she surveyed her husband, but it was that superior smile of pity at a man's dulness and ignorance which women know so well how to use. And Mrs. Jackson kept her secret to herself.

(To be concluded next week).

Result of 15th Sovereign Distribution.

No one applied for the sovereigns in this distribution. The following were the names selected:

W. Brown, Church Street, Wilmslow; W. Dunn, 92 Ludford Street, Crewe; Mrs. Howard, 13 Victoria Road, Runcorn; Thos. O'Brien, 6 Shop Street, Glenamaddy, Ballinasloe; Jas. Powell, Edvin Ralph, Worcester; Jas. Walker, 25 Prospect Place, Gravesend; J. Anderson, 19 Mapier Road, Luton; J. Foster, Beoley, Redditch; Miss M. Johnson, 27 New Mill Street, Dudley; W. Morrison, 5 Greig Street, Inverness; T. Scott, 14 Atlantic Avenue, Antrim Road, Belfast; A. Ward, High Street, Westerham, Kent; J. Leighton, 4 Lincoln Street, Nottingham; Miss F. Church, 7 North Terrace, Wisbeach; W. Gambold, 72 Walkin Street, Swansea; H. Keeling, Sun St. Potton, Sandy, Bedford; Jos. Rose, 14 Frank Street, Leicester; Jas. Tilbury, Ship Street, Wycomb, Bucks; H. Collins, 5 Albion Road, Lewisham; W. Horton, Market Street, Oakengates; E. Abberley, 4 Albert Street, Shrewsbury; Miss Forde, 35 Roman Street, Cork; A. Vickers, 17 High Street, Nantwich; S. McAdam, 21 Spencer Street, Belfast; W. Bird, 5 Lowfield Grove, Stockport; Mrs. Harbord, Seaside, Aldborough, Hull; John Leslie, 8 Chappel Street, Lowestoft; H. Trigg, 25 Albert Road, Richmond, Surrey; C. Winter, Eastwich Rectory, Harlow, Essex; T. Alston, 2 Turrall House, Turrall Street, Worcester; Mrs. Chouler, Ingleside, Kingsley Road, Northampton; G. M'Innes, 52 Seafield Road, Dundee; H. Scull, 7 Oakfield Street, Cardiff; Mrs. Anderson, 38 Kirk Gate, Newark-upon-Trent; H. G. Davies, 7 Lambton Road, Hornsey Rise; C. B. Woolpack, Godmanchester, Huntingdon; J. Treanor, Hill Street, Newry; E Wright, High Street, Middleton; T. Burman, Tennants Bridge, Libsey, Boston; G. Cook, Chantry, Headcorn, Ashford; Jos. Barrett, 1 Thames Street, Oxford; J. Fryer, 33 Benson Street, Linthorpe, Middlesborough; F. Hicklin, 3 Gerard Street, Derby; Thos. Davies, 6 Great Eastern Terrace, Neyland; W. Bailey, 13 Church Road, Ilfracombe, Devon; Miss Wilde, 49 Richmond Road, Stamford Hill; W. Tailby, 19 Wardsend, Loughboro; Isaac Clark, 120 Vicarage Road, Plumstead; A. Wheeler, 54 Bridge Street, Worksop; M. Carter, 85 Crown Road, Yarmouth.

A UTOPIAN SCHEME

would be for every reader of a paper to be his (or her) own Editor. Each one would then have exactly the reading required. For fair woman, HOME NOTES has filled the gap, for in it are there not numerous competitions with huge prizes, chats about children, talks about health and beauty, hints on house decoration, serial and short stories, fascinating fashions, and matters too numerous to mention?

IF YOU KNOW OF A BETTER STORY

THAN THE

"KETTLE" ADVENTURE

IN THE

February "Pearson's,"

NOW ON SALE,

WE SHALL BE GLAD TO PURCHASE IT FROM YOU.

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Tragedy of a Girl's Life.

A RATTLE of musketry came from the direction of the village. The old grave-digger, Boloski, wakened by the noise, sat up on his miserable pallet, listened a moment to the sharp, quick reports, then called aloud: "Milena! Milena!"

"Coming, father, coming," she answered, and already the little naked feet showed themselves upon the rungs of the ladder which led from the loft.

"Did you hear them, Milena?" he cried, "the sounds of the gun shots? They are fighting in the village—" a violent attack of coughing interrupted his words, and another rattling volley.

Milena had descended just as she quitted her couch of straw—a young girl, tall, vigorous, and scantily draped in a brief chemise. She had thrown about her shoulders a short pelisse of sheepskin, but her Amazon hips showed themselves firm and beautiful under their light covering, and her breasts appeared an instant, white as polished marble, against the dead black fur.

"It is true, then!" said she, leaping the last steps; "it has come at last!"

"What, my child?" demanded the sick man.

"The Revolution has broken out to-night, which has been expected so long."

"Yes, and a great misfortune it is too," mumbled Boloski and he crouched again upon his couch. Milena meanwhile hurriedly arrayed herself in a wadded petticoat and her father's long boots. Binding a scarlet handerchief about her abundant locks, she went out to learn what was passing.
pelisse closer.

Below, in the heart of the valley, the village had delivered itself up to strife and bloodshed, yet here upon this sacred ground all was peace. A large cross rose in the middle of the inclosure, to which was attached the figure of the dying Saviour—icicles pendant from the thorns which crowned His brow and from the nails which pierced His hands and feet.

Milena listened intently—not a murmur for the moment broke the stillness. She stopped and gazed up at the heavens, the vast blue vault which seemed to her a satin canopy, retained in place by the golden nails which sparkled and scintillated above her, while beyond there, on the other side of the forest, rode the red disc of the rising moon.

All at once a gliding, crouching form passed her like a flash, a pair of glowing eyeballs glared into her own.

"A wolf!" she murmured, and, with an energetic movement, wherein shone all the savage strength of this child of nature, she seized a stone from the neighbouring wall, and threw herself forward. A low howl responded to the stroke of her arm, and the hungry beast was gone as it had come—a shadow—through those files of tombs and spectral crosses.

A fresh crash of musketry sounded in the distance, another, and still another. Milena traversed at a run the slope of the road which led to the village, and, at the beginning of the first houses, met a neighbour and a wounded man, the wife, whom she knew well, supporting the husband, whose blood dyed the snow at every step.

"What is the matter?" demanded Milena.

"The peasants of our village," replied the man, "and of Mikonloff are struggling with the insurgents down by the café and the little wood. All goes well, however; the scythes are sharp and do their bloody mowing; the heads fall like grain!"

"So!" said Milena; and she aided the peasant woman to place her husband in his bed and to bind his wounds. Then she retraced her steps to tranquilise her father.

An hour later a loud knocking sounded upon the gate of the cemetery.

"See what it is, Milena," said the grave-digger again; and Milena, obeying the command, opened the wicket obstructed by frost, to find before it a row of sledges encompassed by horsemen, the barrels of their muskets and the blades of their sickles sparkling in the rays of the moon.

"Come, open the gate, old mole!" shouted a voice from the crowd; "open the gate, and open quickly. We bring you a score of distinguished guests!"

"But I want no guests," replied Boloski from the interior. "I am ill, as you know well; I dare not go out in a night like this."

"Ill or no," cried the voice again, "the work must be done."

"Well, bury them yourselves, then."

"We cannot—we have no time."

"In that case," said Milena brusquely, shutting the wicket to end the discussion, "tis I who will bury them for you." And she went out to open the gate to the four loaded sledges, bearing the dead bodies of the insurgents, and to the conquerors, armed with their bloody sickles and gleaming scythes.

"Throw them there upon the snow," said she to the

mayor of the village, who greeted her as she appeared with a friendly nod; "I'll start business for you at the rising of the sun."

"No," said the mayor; "that would not be Christian—the wolves and ravens are already waiting to do their work—they must be buried now. You will receive for the job the usual sum in addition to that two quarts of brandy, and, for your back, a new pelisse. Is it a bargain?"

"A bargain," she answered. "I'll begin when you say," and with arms akimbo and robust fists upon her hips, she regarded the defile of peasants and sledges rapidly discharging their score of dead.

Her beautiful face remained impassive; pity seemed a stranger to those hard features, and yet what charm, what passion in those great black eyes, in that sensitive nose, in that firm, severe mouth.

The mayor counted the money into her hand, put the bottle of brandy on the snow beside her, and the sledges slowly drew on again, the peasants following in their wake as silently as they had come.

"But the pelisse?" demanded Milena.

"To-morrow, when the work is done."

And the mayor also quitted the cemetery, and Milena took up her spade, and with a great swallow of brandy commenced to dig the first trench, crooning as she worked, the words of an ancient grave-digger's song.

The sad melody, monotonous and slow as befitted the song of the dead, was accompanied by the dull ringing of the iron upon the frozen ground and the distant howling of the hungry wolves.

Another swallow of brandy, another swing of her muscular arms, and so it went till the trench was done, and Melina, waiting a moment to regain her breath, gazed on the corpses.

"'Twas doubtless you," said she to an old man, with long, white curls, clad in a rich cloak, trimmed with zibeline, and in whose girdle sparkled a superb yataghan, "'twas doubtless you who led the band. Well, this time too, you shall go before!"

And she took him in her arms like a little child, decended into the trench herself and gently laid him on the ground. With the others she was not so ceremonious, an arm, a leg, a shoulder—anything, in short, that helped to lift and toss them to their bed in the ditch, served her purpose.

"But Heaven help me!" she cried, as before her in the snow lay stretched a bleeding trunk, "Heaven help me, if it isn't the lord of Kamiez, that cursed Turk, and oppressor of the poor."

And she struck the face of the head that lay beside the trunk a blow which sent it rolling like a ball to the depths below. Another swallow of brandy, a new body in the hole, then the tomb securely closed, Melina was ready to begin the second.

In the meantime, the moon, rising higher and higher in the heavens, wrapped in its warm light the silent graves, the crucifix, the roofs of the now sleeping village and the vast and soundless plain.

And again the second trench ready, the gravedigger's daughter approached another group of dead. The face of the first one was covered with blood which had ran from a cut in the head. At the same instant she heard a sigh—a long, shuddering breath that came from this body. Melina drew back hastily; courageous as she was, she felt her hair rise upon her head; and soon she saw that rigid body begin to stir.

He still lived, then. There was no longer a doubt of it. She caught him in her arms in order to succour him, rubbing with snow that face begrimed with blood and powder, and chafing his frozen hands. In a moment his eyes unclosed.

"Valerian!" his name upon Milena's lips was half a scream and half a cry of menacing anger.

She shook her head brusquely, thrust him from her, and rose to her feet.

"Save you!" said she with a calm more terrible than either rage or the joy of a glutted vengeance, "when it is God who has delivered you into my hands! You betrayed me—you now belong to me. Pray to your God, Valerian; perhaps He will be merciful, but from me expect no mercy."

"You have forgotten, then, Milena, forgotten how I loved you!"

"No, I have forgotten nothing; but you, what have you done with all those vows? You! who ruined me—who then, in spite of everything, left me for another! I shall not spare you—be sure of that!"

"You will not kill me?" groaned the unhappy one.

"Kill you? No!"

She smiled with a glacial irony which made him shudder.

"I shall only do my duty—I shall bury you as I have received orders!"

"Bury me!" cried Valerian. "Bury me, living?"

"Why not?" responded Milena, with a burst of cruel laughter. "I must earn the sheepskin for my back which the mayor promised me!"

"Have pity, Milena; for Heaven's sake, have pity!"

"Did you have pity upon me?" she answered sternly. "You, who have vowed me to sorrow and to shame. This for your beautiful love—behold it."

And she seized him by the shoulders and sought to thrust him in; but he, with that frightful death before him, had risen to his feet, and a furious struggle began between them,—a hopeless struggle too, for soon Valerian renounced all thought of wresting himself from the embrace of this savage creature. From the loss of blood his strength was gone from him—he was but a child in her cruel hands.

"Mercy, Milena, I beseech you—mercy!"

She responded with a disdainful foot-thrust which sent him rolling into the gaping hole. A last time he struggled to his feet, his arms outstretched and clasping her knees with supplicating gesture.

But his prayers only rendered her more ferocious still. She caught up her spade and struck his hands—their grasp relaxed, she struck again, a second, a third blow—he fell!

And Melina?

Milena, with one hand clenched upon her spade, the other doubled upon her hip, stood there and heard him groaning—stood there and contemplated him with cold, fierce eyes and voluptuous pleasure.

"Now," said she, "now, Valerian, are you mine?"

Then she began to crumble the earth between her fingers and to fill the ditch, to fill it in and stamp it down, as she had filled and stamped the first, her voice firm and clear as ever, rising always in the chorus of her sinister song, and always accompanied by the sound of the clods falling one upon the other by the ring of the spade, by the cawing crows circling hungrily above the heap of the unburied dead. And, in the east, the first grey lights of the coming morning slowly spread themselves across the heavens, pale and cold as the smile upon the faces of the frozen clay.

Sacher Masoch.

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With Her Own Weapons.

MARION meant to be sympathetic, after the manner of men, by uttering philosophical platitudes as a balm for sentimental heart troubles; but he quickly realised that the case before him was too genuine and severe to be cured by such superficial ointment as cynical quotations from Kipling. So he took another tack.

"Of course, old man, there are women and women. Some can be had for the asking, while others play for all the line they can get. It's just like fishing"—his metaphor suggesting an illustration from sport—"one fish will bite at almost anything; but another insists on a nice fly for an attraction, and, even after you've got it really hooked, you've got to play it until your patience is almost gone.

"Now, you'd rather have a girl with some spirit—one who'd stand you off for a time—than one who was all the time throwing herself at your head, wouldn't you?"

Warren vouchsafed a weak, doubtful "Yes."

"By-the-way, have you asked her?"

"No. That's the difficulty. I don't really get a chance. Just as I get myself spurred up to the mark some confounded interruption interferes, or she turns it off with some remark or other."

"You think the girl really cares for you?" asked Marion, dropping his raillery and becoming serious.

"I think she does," frankly answered Warren, "although sometimes I feel as if I didn't know whether she did or not," he continued, somewhat dubiously.

"Well, there's only one way to find out," remarked Marion, "and that is to—here, I have a plan," breaking abruptly into his sentence. "I have a plan," he slowly repeated, "and I believe it will work if you follow my advice. Put yourself in my hands," he continued, his face brightening, as his plan was unfolded to his mind, "and I'll bet that you'll win."

Then he buttonholed Warren, pulled him into a corner, and addressed him in a low, earnest tone, interspersing his remarks with emphatic gestures. When he had finished, Warren still looked dubious, but somewhat more hopeful.

* * * * *

"Good evening, Mr. Warren. I'm so glad to see you. We're just packing up—getting ready to go to the country."

"Indeed! Lovely weather. Hope you'll have a pleasant time." But he might have been a phonograph, or a Punch-and-Judy operator, for all the expression he put into his words.

"Oh! I've no doubt we shall," she answered, with a toss of her head. "There's so much going on there, and so many interesting people to meet," she continued, with a bored air, as if her immediate surroundings were productive of nothing but *ennui*.

"Yes," he assented, in a listless monotone, which might mean anything or nothing.

She pretended not to notice his abstracted manner and rattled on:

"My friends write me there are ever so many nice people there, and with golf and driving and boating, there'll be no end of fun."

"Yes."

Again that tone of polite indifference.

"Well, I'm going for a trip myself," he added, rousing himself from his lethargy, and almost blurting out his words.

"Indeed! Where?"

This was her turn.

"To Hong Kong."

"To Hong Kong?"

This time she was interested in spite of herself. She repeated his answer with distinct emphasis on the words, and a rising inflection at the end.

"Oh, come now, you're joking. Your——"

"No, really," he asserted; "there's an opening there in our firm. They want a young man to take charge of their branch banking house there, and I can have the place. It looks like a good opening, and I thought I'd take it. Of course, it means"—clearing his throat—"tearing one's self away from one's friends, but then, I shall probably not be greatly missed."

"Oh, Mr. Warren," broke in the girl reproachfully.

The coquettish manner was gone. The genuine woman was speaking.

"Well, for a day or two a few may notice my absence, and then——"

He finished the sentence with a careless wave of his hand, to denote the ephemeral nature of the friendship he conceived was felt for him.

"But there are no nice girls there," she remarked mischievously.

She was trying to get back to the coquette again, but her eyes were moist.

"That isn't a consideration," he answered gloomily. "There's only one girl in this world for whose smile I'd give the hopes I entertain for my business future, and I'm afraid that in her eyes I'm but as all the rest of the world."

"Who is the young lady, may I ask; do I know her?" she queried with an attempt at gaiety.

Warren glanced at her, but she wasn't looking at him. She seemed to be manifesting an extraordinary interest in picking at the end of a ribbon on her dress.

* * * * * *

"I have just been reading the social gossip," wrote Marion, who had gone north for a month on business, "and I congratulate you. But why in the name of all that's absurd did you hesitate so long? The game must have been in your hands from the first. One of these fine days you will want a crest. How would this suggestion meet your approval: 'A bold bluff painted on a field of blue?'"

And he underscored two words in the last sentence.

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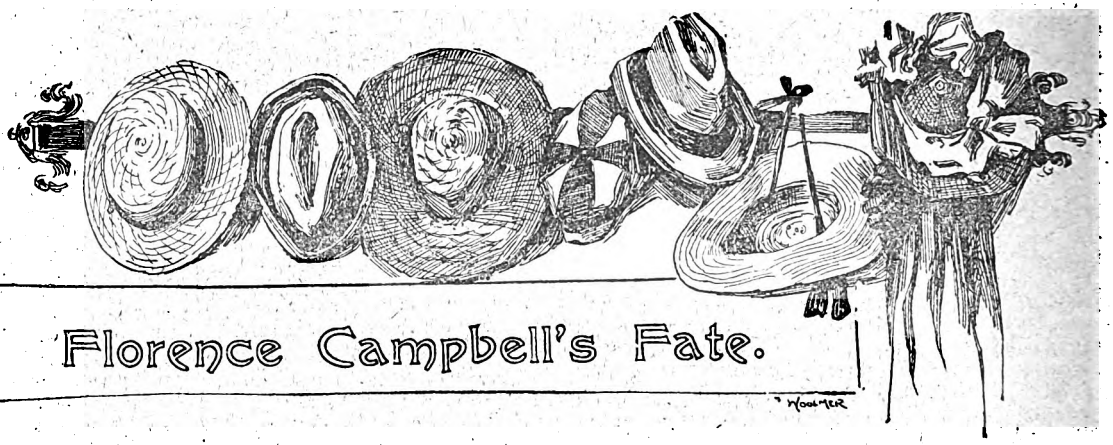
RALPH HENWOOD.



Florence Campbell's Fate.

I AM, as you know, not a young man, and in the practice of my profession I have learned to diagnose the cases that come under my care very slowly and by degrees. Every year has taught me that physical symptoms are often the result of mental ailments, and that, while cordials and powders are sometimes very useful aids, the first and all important thing is to understand fully the true history of the patient.

Now when I was first called to see Florence Campbell the message conveyed to me threw no light on the case, beyond what the most ordinary observer would have detected at a glance. The note read thus:

DR. H. HAMILTON.

DEAR SIR,—Although I have been here for several months, it is the first time since I came that I have myself felt that I needed medical attention. I have, therefore, not sent you the inclosed note (the history of which you no doubt know) until now. If you will read it, it will explain that the time has now come when, if you will come to me, I need your care.—Yours respectfully,

FLORENCE CAMPBELL.

The note inclosed was from a physician in Manchester whom I had known intimately many years before, but with whom I had held no communication for a long time past. It said:

MY DEAR DOCTOR,—One of my patients is about to visit London. The length of her stay is uncertain, and, as she is often ailing, she has asked me to give her a note to one whom I believe to be skilful, and to possess the qualities which she requires in a physician. In thinking over the list of those known to me in London, I have decided to give her this note to you. She is one of those rare patients to whom you can afford to tell the unvarnished truth, and from whom you can expect it. She has had no serious illness recently, but is rather subject to slight colds and sick headache. I give her sulph. 12. She always responds to that in time.—Yours, as ever, THOMAS C. GRISWOLD.

I do not know that I ever entered a more delicately perfumed room than the one in which Florence Campbell sat.

She rose from her deep armchair as I entered, and extending her hand, grasped mine with a vigour unusual in a woman, even when she is well.

"This is Doctor Hamilton?" she said in a clear voice; "I am very glad to see you, Doctor. I am Florence Campbell. You received a note from your friend, Dr. Griswold, telling how I came into possession of it."

Direct of speech, clear of voice, hand feverish, but firm in grasp, I commented mentally as she spoke. This was not what I expected.

She stood with her back to the light, very erect and well poised.

"Come to the window," I said. "Does your head ache?"

She laughed.

"Oh, I don't know that it does—not particulary, I fancy there is not much inside of it to ache much. Mere bone and vacuity could not do a great deal in that line, could it, Doctor?"

Then she laughed again. She looked me in the eyes, and I fancy she was diagnosing me.

She was evidently trying to gain time—to take my measure.

"It is always rather a trying thing to get a new doctor, don't you think so?" she asked, with another little laugh. "I always feel so foolish to think I have called him for so trifling a matter as my ailments are. I cannot expect you to furnish me with robust ancestors, can I? Just keep me out of bed,"—and here, for the first time, I noticed a slight tremor in her voice—"just keep me so that I can read, and—so that I shall not need to sit alone, and I think I shall be quite satisfied—quite!"

She had turned her face away as she said the last; but I saw that she was having a hard struggle to keep back the tears, notwithstanding the little laugh that followed.

I had felt her pulse; it was hardly perceptible, and fluttered rather than beat, and I had watched her closely as she spoke; but whenever she came near the verge of showing deeper than the surface, she broke in with that non-committal little laugh, or turned her face, or half closed her great eyes, and I was foiled. Her pulse and the faint blue veins told me one story; she tried to tell me quite another.

"How are you suffering to-day?" I asked.

She looked steadily at me a moment, then lowering her eyes, raised her left hand, looked at its palm a moment, held her lips tightly closed, and then with a sudden glance at me, as if on the defensive, said:

"I hardly know; I am only a little under the influence of the weather; I am weak. I am losing my—hold—on myself—on my—nerves. I cannot afford to do that."

The last was said with more emotion than she cared to display. So she arose, walked swiftly to the dressing-case, took up a lace handkerchief, and returned to a chair which stood in the shadow, and then, with a merry little peal of laughter, said:

"Well, I don't wonder, Doctor, that you are unable to

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diagnose that case. It would require a barometer to do that, I fancy, from the amount of weather I got into it. But really, now, how am I to know what is the matter with me? That is for you to say; I am not the doctor. I suppose it is malaria, don't you?"

I wanted to gain time—to study her a little. I saw that she was or had been, really ill; ill, that is, in mind, if not in body. I fancied that she succeeded in deceiving Griswold into treating her for some physical trouble which she did not have, or, if she had it, only as a result of a much graver malady.

The right branch may have been found and nipped off from time to time when it grew uncomfortably long; but the root, I believed, had not been touched, and, I thought, had not been even suspected by her former physician.

I believed that Griswold had not fully understood his former patient. "Sulph. 12" indeed! Then I smiled, and said aloud:

"Dr. Griswold writes me that in such cases as yours he advises sulph. 12—that it has given relief. Do you call yourself a sulphur patient?"

I watched her narrowly, and, if she did not smile in a satirical way, I was deceived.

"Are you out of that remedy? and do you want more of it?" I asked, with a serious face.

She did not reply at once. There seemed to be a struggle in her mind as to how she would let me know. Then she looked at me attentively for a moment, with a puzzled expression I thought; then an unutterably weary look crossed her face. She said slowly and deliberately:

"I have no doubt sulphur will do as well as anything else. Oh, yes! I am decidedly a sulphur patient, no doubt. I suppose I have taken several pints of that remedy in my time. A number of physicians have given it to me from time to time."

How far would she go, and how far would she let me go, with this nonsense? I looked gravely into her eyes, and said, "That remedy will do. It sometimes holds a patient until a doctor can decide exactly which complaint is to be treated. In your case I am inclined to suspect the—that it is—the heart. I shall, therefore, begin by asking you to be good enough to tell me what it is that affects your heart."

I had taken her wrist in my hand as I began to speak. My finger was on her pulse. It gave a great bound, and then beat rapidly; and although her face grew a shade paler and her eyes wavered as they tried to look into mine, I knew that I had both surprised and impressed her.

She recovered herself instantly, and made up her mind to hedge still further.

"If there is anything the matter with my heart, you are the first to suspect it. My father, however, died of heart disease, and I have always hoped that I should die as suddenly. But I shall not—I shall not! I am so wiry, so all-enduring! I recover! I always recover!"

She said this passionately, and as if it were a grave misfortune—as if she were very old. I pretended to take it humourously.

"Perhaps at your advanced age your father might have said the same."

She laughed. She saw a loop-hole, and immediately took it.

"Oh, you think I am very young, Doctor, but I am not. People always think me younger than I am—at first. I look older when you get used to me. I am nearly thirty."

I was surprised. I had taken her to be about twenty-three.

"In years, or in experience? Which way do you count your age?"

She got up suddenly again and walked to the dressing-case, then to the window. In doing so she raised her hand to her eyes. It was the hand with the lace handkerchief in it.

"Experience!" she exclaimed, and then, checking herself: "No, people never think me so old—not at first," she said, returning to her chair. "But I suppose I am not too old to be cured with sulph. 12, am I?"

"Miss Campbell," I said, stepping quickly up to her side, and surprising her, "you do not need sulphur. You need to be relieved of this strain on your nerves. Make up your mind to tell me your history to-morrow morning—to tell it all; I do not want some fairy tales. Until then, take these drops to quiet your nerves."

There were tears in her eyes. She did not attempt to hide them. They ran down her cheeks, and she simply closed the lids, and let them flow. I took her lace handkerchief, and wiped her cheeks. Then I dropped it in her lap, placed the phial on her stand, took up my hat, and left.

* * * * *

But I did not get her story the next day, nor the next, nor the next again.

Her tact was perfectly mystifying in its intricacy; her power of evasion marvellous, and her study of me amusing.

One morning she made a remark that seemed to show that she feared to die. I seized the opportunity, for I thought by a little adroitness I might get at least a part of the truth.

"So you are really afraid to die, and yet think that you must," I said bluntly.

She turned her great luminous eyes on me, and her lip curled slightly with real scorn before she forced upon her face her usual remark of good-humoured sarcasm.

"Afraid!" she exclaimed; "afraid to die! Afraid of what, pray? I cannot imagine being afraid to die. It is life I am afraid of. If I could only——"

She checked herself abruptly, and with an evident effort resumed her light air and tone.

"Ah, my child," said I, taking her hand, which was almost as cold and white as marble, "and there are Doctors deceived, and confiding persons who prescribe 'sulph 12' for the broken heart and over-wrought nerves of a little woman who tries bravely to fly her gay colours in the face of defeat and to whistle a tune at a grave."

I had called late, and we were sitting in the twilight, but I saw tears fall on her lap, and she did not withdraw her hand, which trembled violently.

I had touched the wound roughly, as I had determined to do; but, old man as I was, and used to the sight of suffering as I had been for years, I could restrain myself only by an effort from taking her in my arms and asking her to forget what I said. She seemed so utterly shaken. We sat for some moments in perfect silence, except for her quick, smothered little sobs, and then she said, passionately:

"Oh, Heaven, Doctor, how did you know?" And then, with a flash of fear in her voice, "Who told you?"

"I know nothing except what I have seen of your brave fight, my child. All the information I have had about you, from outside, was contained in that little note of introduction from Griswold.

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"I have not watched you for nothing; and I never treat a patient without first diagnosing his case. I do not say that I am always right, but I am, at least, not blind, and I have always been interested in you. I should like to help you, if you will let me. I can do nothing for you in the dark." Then dropping my voice significantly:

"Does he know where you are? Does he know you are ill?"

There was a long silence. I did not know but that she was offended. She was struggling for command of her voice, and for courage. Presently she said, in a hoarse whisper, which evidently shocked her as much as it startled me, so unnatural did it sound:

"Who? My husband?"

"Your husband!" I exclaimed. "Are you—is there—I did not know you were married. Why did you always allow me to call you Miss Campbell?"

"I do not know," she said wearily. "It makes no difference to me, and it seemed to please your fancy to treat me as a child. But I really never noticed that you did always call me Miss. If I had I should not have cared. What difference could it make to me—or to you—what prefix you put to my name?"

"But I did not know that you were married," I said almost sharply.

She looked up startled for a moment; but recovering in an instant she said, smiling a little, and, with evident relief, plunging into a new opening:

"That had nothing to do with my case. There was no need to discuss family relations. I never thought of whether you were married or not. You were my doctor—I your patient. It would not be—edifying to talk about my affairs."

"You are tired out," I said, rising. I judged it prudent to go. "Go to bed now. Order your tea brought up. Here is an order to see to anything you may ask promptly. Beesley, the proprietor, is an old friend of mine. Any order you may give, if you send it down with this note from me, will be obeyed at once. I will come to-morrow. Good-night."

I put the order on the table at her side. I know my voice was husky; it startled me as I heard it. She sat perfectly still; but she laid her other hand on top of mine with a light pressure, and her voice sounded tired and full of tears.

"Good-night. You are very kind—very thoughtful. I will be brave to-morrow. Good-night."

That night I drove past and saw a light in her window at one o'clock.

"Poor child!" I said, "will she be brave enough to tell me to-morrow, or will she die with her burden, and her gay little laugh on her lips?"

* * * * *

The next day I called earlier than usual. I had spent an almost sleepless night, wondering what I could do for this beautiful, lovable woman, who seemed to be all alone in the world, and who evidently felt that she must remain apart and desolate.

What had caused her to leave her husband? Or had he left her? What for? What kind of man was he? Did she love him, and was she breaking her heart for him? Or did he stand between her and some other love? Had she married young, and made a mistake that was eating her life out? How could I help her?

As I stepped into the hotel office to send up my card, as was my custom, the manager escorted me with his perfunctory smile and said:

"Good morning, Doctor. Got so in the habit o' coming here lately, s'pose it'll take quite a while to leave it off. Eh?"

I stared at the man in utter bewilderment.

"Ha! ha! ha! I believe you'd forgot already she'd gone." And then, with a quick flash of surprise and intelligent, detective shrewdness, "You knew she was going, doctor? She did not let you in for her little bill, did she? Of course not. Her husband was in such a dickens of a hurry to catch the early train, they said he was ringing his bell the blessed night for fear they'd lose it. You hadn't gone five minutes last night, when he came down here with your cheque and order, and we had to make things lively to get cash enough together to meet it for her; but we made it, and so they got off all right."

"Have you got my cheque here yet?" asked I, in a tone that arrested the attention of the manager, who looked up in surprise.

"Good Heavens, no! Do you think we're made of ready money, just because you are? That cheque was in the bank the first thing after banking hours," said he. "You see, it cleaned us out last night. I told Campbell last night that you must think hotels were queer to expect us to cash a five hundred pound cheque at five minutes notice. Couldn't 'a done it at all if 't hadn't been pay-night for the servants and the rest of us. We all had to wait till to-day. But Mr. Beesley will tell you. Here he comes."

"Why, Doctor, old boy," said Beesley, coming up from behind and clapping me vigorously on the shoulder, "didn't expect to see the light of your countenance here again so soon. Thought we owed it all to your professional ardour for that charming patient of your's up in number 13. They got off all right, but if any other man but you had sent that order and cheque down here for us to cash last night I wouldn't have cashed it. Of course, I understood that they were called away suddenly, unexpectedly, and all that. He told me all about it, and that you did not complete the bargain until the last minute; but——"

"Bargain?" gasped I, in spite of my determination to hear all before disclosing anything.

"Oh, it was all right, my boy, as long as it was you—glad to do you a good turn any day. But what a queer idea for that little woman to marry such a man! How did it happen? I'd like to know the history. Every time I saw him come I made up my mind to ask you about them, and then I always forgot it when I saw you. He told me you had been his wife's guardian!"

I left the hotel abruptly, my brain in a whirl; I could not see through this maze. My name had been forged on a cheque, and I had in some way been duped, that was all I could grasp.

But not duped by her—no, no, I would never believe that. It was by this man who called himself her husband.

Later, when calmer, I tried to thrash it all out, but all I could do was to lay the blame on someone else, not upon her, whom I loved—yes, that was the truth; old man that I was, I had fallen in love with her.

Then I resolved to make inquiries, even though I hated myself for so doing.

How about Griswold's introduction — and that "sulph. 12." I looked through my desk for Griswold's note. It was certainly his handwriting; but I noticed for the first time that it did not mention her name.

Perhaps this was a loophole through which I might bring my fair patient—in whom I was beginning to fear I had taken too deep an interest—without discredit to herself.

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Might she not have changed her name since Griswold treated her? I determined to give her the benefit of this doubt until I could be sure that it had no foundation.

I felt relieved by this respite, and heartily ashamed of the unjust suspicion of the moment before, I gave no hint of it in the letter I now wrote Griswold describing the lady, and in which I inclosed his letter of introduction to me.

The next few days I went about my practice in a dream, and it was no doubt due to fortuitous circumstances rather than to my skill that several of my patients still live to tell the tale of their suffering, and of my phenomenal ability to cope with disease in all its malignant power.

In due time Griswold's letter came. I went into my room to read it. I remember thinking vaguely that I usually took time to open my letters with more precision and with less disregard for the untidy appearance of their outing covering afterwards. I hesitated to read beyond the first line, although I had so hastened to get that far. I read: "My dear old friend," and then turned the letter over to see how long it was—how much probable information it contained. There were four closely-written pages.

"I never heard of anyone of the name of Florence Campbell, so far as I can recall. I certainly never had a patient by that name. Some months ago I gave the letter you enclose—which I certainly did write—to a patient of mine who was on her way to the Cape, and expected to stay some time in London on her way.

"She, however, was in no way like the lady you describe. Her name was Hatfield, and she was small, with dreamy blue eyes and flaxen hair. I understood that she did not stop but a few days in London. I have since learned from her brother that she made the acquaintance of a man whose name was Campbell—a man with a decidedly vague, not to say hazy, reputation; and that his wife, who was supposed to be an invalid, never appeared in public, and so was never seen by Hatfield, but was only known to him through Kitty's enraptured eyes. She was said to be bright and pretty. Miss Hatfield is the most generous child alive in her estimate of other women. However, he thinks it possible that she either gave her the letter from me to you and asked her to have proper medical care, or else that the woman or her husband got hold of it in a less legitimate way, which I think quite likely. Miss Hatfield thought that Mrs. Campbell was charming.

"Hatfield is so ashamed of his sister's friendship for the woman that I had the utmost difficulty in making him tell me the whole truth; but, from what I gathered yesterday, he thinks them most likely the head of a gang of counterfeiters or forgers, and——"

I read no further, or, if I did, I can recall only that. It was burned into my brain, and when a loud pounding on my door aroused me, I found the letter twisted and torn into a thousand pieces, the Vichy and wine bottles at my side half-empty, and the hands of the clock pointing to half-past ten.

"Doctor! Doctor!" called my man, "oh, Doctor! Oh, dear! I'm afraid something's wrong with the Doctor, but I'm afraid to break in the door."

I went to the door to prevent a scene. One of my best patients stood there, with Morgan, the man. Both of them were pale and full of suppressed excitement.

"Heavens and earth, Doctor, we were afraid you were dead! What is the matter?" said my patient.

"Tired out; went to sleep," said I; but I did not know my own voice as I spoke. It sounded distant, and its tones were strange.

They both looked at me suspiciously, and with evident anxiety as to my mental condition. I caught at the means of escape.

"I am too tired to see anyone to-night. In fact, I am not well. You will have to let me off this time. Get Dr. Talbott, lower down, if anyone is ill; I am going to bed. Good-night!"

It was two months later ere I heard the truth, and that was when called upon to make a post-mortem examination of the body of a woman found murdered. It was Florence Campbell!

The body was identified by Miss Kate Hatfield, and afterwards I obtained particulars from her.

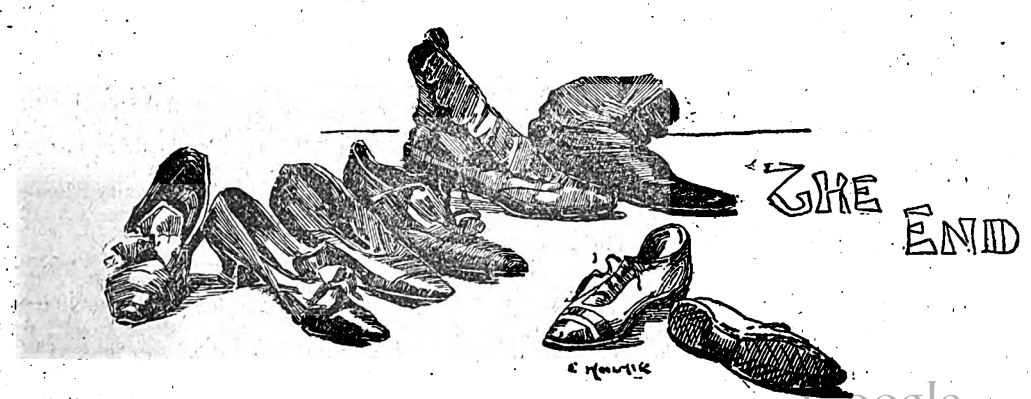
It was part of the scheme that Mrs. Campbell should be an "invalid," but the husband and wife were professional swindlers. They were kind to Miss Hatfield on purpose, and she was deceived by them and gave up the letter to them. She did not know at the time that they intended to rob me, but she heard it after they left the hotel.

She was so ashamed and afraid that she dare not go back to Manchester or write, and in her weak-minded state she had remained with them.

Who murdered Florence Campbell?

There was not enough evidence to show, but we all had our suspicions.

RALPH WINDSOR.



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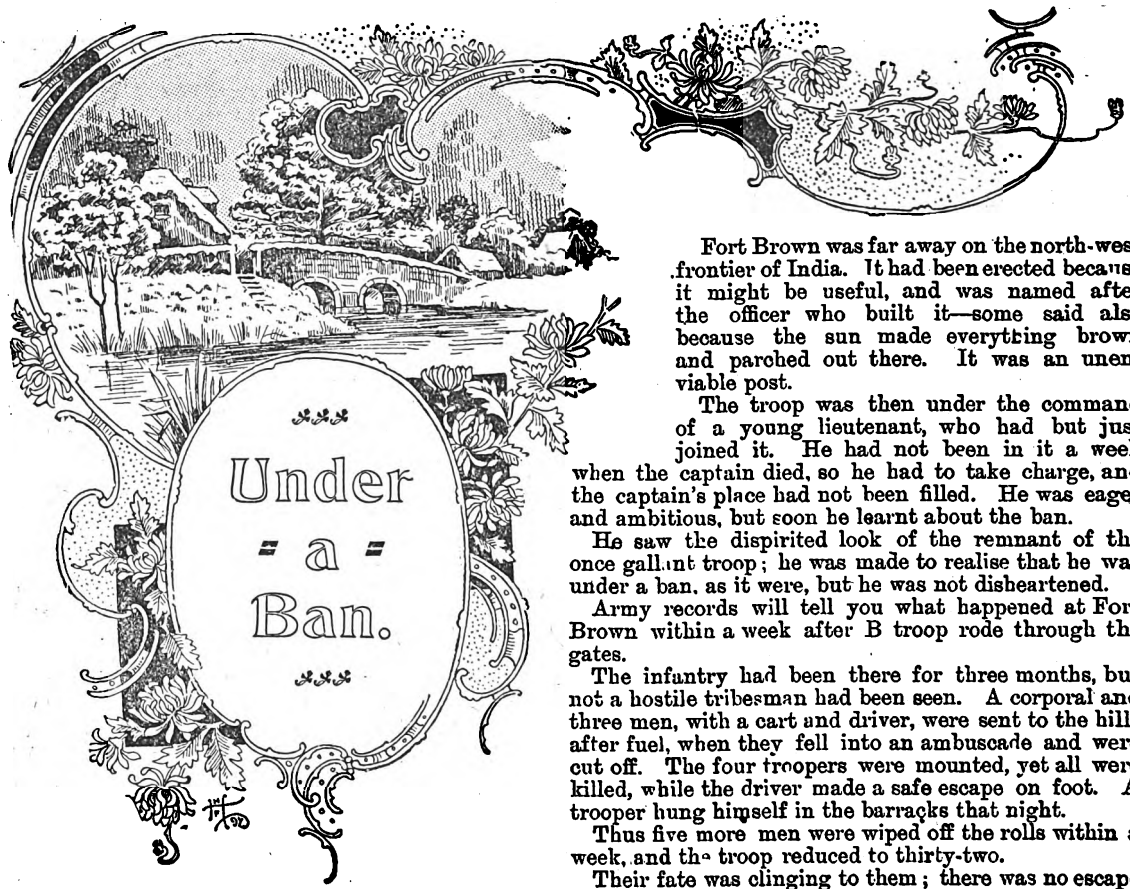

THE story of the spell that hung over B troop is not known to the outside world, nor does the public know that the troops of the 95th were re-named, and that A troop was called D troop, and so on. This is the story of the ban.

There was a time when the troop was high in favour, and officers liked to be drafted to it. Then its ill-luck began. It was sent to the frontier, and disaster after disaster overtook it.

It marched against some hillmen, and somehow—no one knew—it fell into ambush and lost forty men at one sweep. The troop was forced to retire, and disgrace clung to it.

After that, it was kept at a little frontier post at its reduced strength, but its ill-luck continued. Men died apparently while in good health, and three committed suicide at different times. If a party went out for any purpose, it was almost certain to lose at least one man, and yet it never really had an actual fight.

Its reputation became known to army men, and officers used their influence to avoid being drafted to that ill-fated troop. The authorities seemed impressed with the fact that a ban was upon the troop; at any rate, the number was not made up after a while.

Finally the number dwindled to thirty-seven, and it was at that point in its misfortunes that it was sent to Fort Brown, for no other apparent reason than to get rid of it—for there was no need to reinforce the infantry stationed at that solitary fort.

Fort Brown was far away on the north-west frontier of India. It had been erected because it might be useful, and was named after the officer who built it—some said also because the sun made everything brown and parched out there. It was an unenviable post.

The troop was then under the command of a young lieutenant, who had but just joined it. He had not been in it a week when the captain died, so he had to take charge, and the captain's place had not been filled. He was eager and ambitious, but soon he learnt about the ban.

He saw the dispirited look of the remnant of the once gallant troop; he was made to realise that he was under a ban, as it were, but he was not disheartened.

Army records will tell you what happened at Fort Brown within a week after B troop rode through the gates.

The infantry had been there for three months, but not a hostile tribesman had been seen. A corporal and three men, with a cart and driver, were sent to the hills after fuel, when they fell into an ambuscade and were cut off. The four troopers were mounted, yet all were killed, while the driver made a safe escape on foot. A trooper hung himself in the barracks that night.

Thus five more men were wiped off the rolls within a week, and the troop reduced to thirty-two.

Their fate was clinging to them; there was no escape from it.

The colonel at Fort Brown had received the young officer half in welcome, half in pity. He knew the history of B troop, and he realised that any connection with it must cast a shadow on the career of an officer.

The loss of the five men gave the colonel anxious thought. No one could be held to blame. It was simply one of the fatalities which had so persistently pursued the troop.

One day he received news which determined him to take a certain step, and he sent for the young lieutenant and said:

"A friendly native is in with the information that a band of hostiles is making for Brown's Valley. That is where the friendlies who came along two weeks ago were going to settle. I fear they will be unprepared for an attack and will all be massacred."

"And you will send B troop out to drive the enemy off?" eagerly exclaimed the lieutenant.

"If you could reach Amghir post, twenty miles away, before the hostiles, you might turn them back. If they get ahead of you——"

"I would push on after them and hope to save the friendlies. I can be ready in half an hour."

The colonel was a man of forty-five, the lieutenant not yet twenty-three. The older officer looked out of the open window, and thought of the long ride—the fight which must surely take place. Then he looked at the boy and wondered if it would be the last of B troop or the turn of its luck.

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He was both a soldier and a man. As a soldier he desired to give a soldier a chance. As a man he feared to send out a boy like that where it needed an experienced head.

"You know the spell that is upon us," whispered the lieutenant. "The troop is slowly but surely being cleared off the face of the earth. The men are objects of pity and sympathy and have almost become children. Let me go. I will either win a victory or it will be the last of the troop."

The spirit of the old soldier was stirred. He had given many a young soldier opportunity to distinguish himself, and but for the spell he would not have hesitated in this case. Dispirited men, an officer who had never tackled these tribesmen, and the demon of ill-luck, which had walked at a company's heels like a ghost—no wonder he hesitated. He shook his head and decided that the scout must ride hard and fast, but ride alone, and warn the natives of their danger.

"I beg of you—we all beg of you!" pleaded the lieutenant. "Cavalry is needed to head those fellows off. If the friendlies are killed it will be said that you thought us cowards, and were afraid to order us out."

"There will be thirty-two of you and one hundred of the enemy," said the colonel.

"But we will turn them back, sir; we will fight them!"

"And if they are too many for you?"

"I know the history of the troop, sir," said the boy in trembling tones. "It has lost almost seventy men by desertion, suicide, and skirmish. It has not lost a man in a real fight. They shall say of it in the next three days that it has won a fight or been wiped out. I would rather be lying dead there than continue to serve in a troop which has such a record!"

"You may go," said the colonel. "If it is a mistake, then Heaven help me! Turn those tribesmen back, and I will recommend you for promotion. If they are too many for you——"

"Then you will know it by the fact that we do not return."

Half-an-hour later the men of B troop rode out of Fort Brown and made for the pass.

"There goes the last of B troop," muttered every soldier left behind as the troopers rode away, and as they said it they instinctively looked up at the flag as if expecting to see it at half-mast.

The troopers had received that order without enthusiasm. They knew they were to make a hard ride and that a fight was probable, but they were neither exultant nor despondent. Like the Arabs, they shrugged their shoulders and said, "Kismet."

They were in the hands of fate, and fate was likely to be against them. With scarcely a farewell, and with never a look over their shoulders, they rode away, two by two, and it was not until long after dark that the officer at the head drew rein and ordered the camp for the night. Before they slept he said to them:

"We shall be up and away at the first signs of daylight. Men, listen to me. We are riding to reach the pass ahead of a war party of one hundred. We shall get there first and beat them back or die fighting. I have promised the colonel this. You have had one disaster after another until your fellow soldiers sneer and pity and wonder if cowardice is not at the bottom of it. I do not believe it is. I believe every man of you to be game, and we will win a victory which shall place the old troop in the front!"

A cheer burst from every man—the first cheering heard in Troop B for many a day. Each man drew himself up more proudly. Their minds worked even as they slept, and when daylight came the officer looked from face to face and wondered at the change. There was an eagerness to make him glad and proud.

Breaking camp as soon as it was light enough to see, the troop rode at a gallop, and reached the gap ahead of the hostiles.

Only a short hour, though. Their horses had not yet ceased blowing when the advance of the enemy was made out.

Their destination was a narrow road through a mountain, and its southern end debouched into Brown's Valley, five miles away. The young officer knew nothing of war; but common sense and his veteran sergeant suggested a breastwork across the entrance to the pass.

One was constructed of rocks and logs and stones, and it was hardly finished before the skirmishers of the war party were firing upon it.

No man will ever read what is called "Cunningham's Defence" without his pulse quickening. One hundred and twenty tribesmen pressed forward against a force of thirty-two troopers. Three different times the enemy charged right up to the breastwork, but each time were beaten back with slaughter. The defenders did not escape death, however. When the last charge was driven back, eight of them were stretched out on the rock soil, and there were but twenty-four to fall back for a mile and build another breastwork.

This move was necessitated by the enemy working up the sides of the mountain, and securing a flank fire.

The second breastwork was evacuated the next morning for the same reason, and a mile in the rear of it another was built. When this had to be abandoned, only ten men were left alive.

When flanked out of their fourth defence, there were only five men. One of these was sent to the valley for help, but was cut off.

Of the other four, of whom the officer was one, they died at the fifth breastwork—died with carbines in their hands after firing their last cartridges, and died with cheers of defiance on their lips.

Of the war party sixty-two were killed or wounded, and it turned back.

One day a B trooper was seen coming on foot across the plain. He lurched and staggered as he walked. Soldiers ran to meet him and assist him into the fort. He had been without food or water for two days. The colonel looked at him for a long time without speaking. Then, with pale face and trembling lips, he asked:

"Lanigan, where is your officer—the troop?"

And Lanigan straightened up, saluted, and in a voice as hoarse as a raven's cry he replied:

"I have to report, sir, that B troop has been annihilated to a man, and Heaven forgive me, but I'm that man! They are dead in the pass—all dead—all dead! I was left for dead, but was only unconscious."

Sybil Sedgwick.

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BOOK III.—CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING OLERON.

CHAPTER I.

How the three became convalescent: how they distrusted the chief sorcerer: and how they discussed their future prospects.

"'The ups and downs of outrageous fortune,'" quoted Sneyd, who was lying in a grass hammock, slung beneath two feathery-topped palm-trees. A cool, fragrant breeze blew from an orange grove close at his right hand. From the other side came up the gentle tinkle tinkle of a streamlet crossing over a bed of shingle on its way to the sea. Overhead, birds kept up a ceaseless melody. Scarlet dragon-flies and gorgeous butterflies winged hither and thither close before his eyes.

O'Neill was in another hammock close by. He was lying with one arm under his head, smoking placidly. At Sneyd's remark he withdrew the pipe, and turned his face so as to bring him into view.

"'Tis an up of fortune this, yer honour, I'm thinkin'. Now that y'are gettin' into a state of convalescence, I don't mind tellin' yez that when we got yez ashore, Sandy Sawbones here thought yez was goin' to slip yer cable for good. Ye were all wrinkles and bones. A hungry musquitty couldn't have made a male off yez, and there's plenty o' them pests here to try."

"You and Sandy saved my life. I don't forget it."

"Sorra bit o' savin' did either of us, yer honour. Where'd we ha' been if it wasn't for Mytto and his father Maantee? Stowed away in a shark-fish's belly, or else an albatross's. An' where'd we ha' been if it wasn't for King Oleron? Fattened till we was fit, an' then shoved into some o' these nay ur's insides, as the prastes wanted when we were landed."

"You never told me of that last," said Sneyd.

"No, yez didn't hear for yourself, and Sandy bade me howld me whisht. It was tonch an' go wid yer honour just then, any way, an' a plazin' little surprise like that moight ha' made it 'go.' It was meself that was wonderin' whether I'd be cooked wid cabbage or onions, or just eat plain wid spuds and a thrifle of salt. Wid yer honour, there was no doubt. There wasn't mate enough on yez for a sthew. They'd either have had to bile yez down for soup, or else ha' served yez up for supper as grilled bones."

"Ugh! O'Neill, don't be a beast. Tell me, though, is this really so?"

"Sorra lie about it, yer honour. It's the naked savage truth I'm tellin' yez. Ax Sandy av there was any mistake in that blear-eyed praste's meaning'."

"I'm afraid it was clear enough," Sandy admitted. "I guessed it at the time, and Mytto has said since that there was no mistake about it. He comes to teach me his lingo. It's pretty easy. I can make out most things he says now. We eke out with signs when we can't understand one another without."

"And what did he say about our being eaten?"

"Just this, Sir——"

"Half a minute," exclaimed Sneyd, sitting up in his hammock. "If you or O'Neill address me as 'Sir,' or by any title of that sort again, whilst we are on this island, I shall be seriously angry. Whilst we were on board ship, it jarred upon me; but O'Neill there said discipline demanded it. But here we are on a level footing, although so far I am showing myself the worst man of the three."

"But, yer honour——" began the Irishman.

"Mister Murtagh O'Niell," said Sneyd, laughing, "if you stick to that game, I promise you I'll Mister you on every possible occasion, and touch my hat when you speak to me. So you've fair warning. Come, Sandy, what was this about our being eaten?"

"Mytto said the sorcerers—they aren't priests exactly—the sorcerers decided on it the moment we came ashore; but the King, who has his headquarters at the next village——"

"Palace, ye spalpeen!"

"All right, O'Neill, palace if it pleases you. Well, the King said that there was an ancient prophecy which foretold that white men should come and help against the Dajians, who, it seems, are enemies of this tribe, and live on another island close by. The sorcerers pretended that they hadn't forgotten the prophecy, but said that we weren't white. We were brown—and they pointed to our faces. The King noticed this, and seemed doubtful; but when Maantee—Mytto's father, that is—pulled back our clothes, and showed that there was white skin where the sun hadn't darkened it, then the King said we should be saved. The old prophecy might have been partly forgotten. The men who were to come might be partly white; in which case we, being brown and white, would fit in with it. I tried to explain to Mytto," Sandy continued, with a dry chuckle, "that our normal tint was white, and that if we were shut up out of the sunlight, we should become the colour of that blinding beach down there, and he was polite enough not to contradict. But, for all that, I'm afraid he didn't believe me."

"We are all of us rather sunburned, an' that's a fact,"

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remarked O'Neill, critically observing his huge red fist, and then, rolling up his sleeve, and comparing it with the hairy, muscular arm above; "but av we stay hard, at work doin' nothing, under these trees, as we have been since we came ashore, it's white as maley potatoes we'll all be, before the month's out. It's meself that's feelin' paler already."

As the Irishmen's face was still a fiery, brick-red, this may be taken as a figure of speech. But the trio of them certainly had been but little in the sun since they landed. The hut assigned to them was cool and shady, and the little cleared space outside it was sheltered by feathery palm frons, which filtered through nothing brighter than a dim twilight. The natives supplied their every food want—the acmé of hospitality in a primitive community, where food is the greatest necessity of life—and they wisely decided to remain quietly where they were till each was thoroughly recruited. The nervous shock, and the physical prostration due to that desperate spell of hunger and thirst, were not to be got over in a matter of hours. Even Sandy Carmichael, who had been the last to succumb to his privations, was very far from being his former self again, even after the lapse of a whole fortnight.

Parties of the islanders came from amongst the trees, and gazed at the newcomers from a respectful distance. Everything about the strangers was new to them—their dress, their complexions, their manners—but they did not exhibit any rude curiosity. They never made their visits obnoxious. In fact, one and all displayed a simple curiosity, that might very well have been copied by many of the *soi disant* higher civilisations.

The great majority stayed at a distance. Only the privileged few came up close. Of these last were Mytto and his father Maantee; and it was from them that our three Europeans were industriously learning the language of Erma and its sister islands. The tongue was, after the first few attempts, an easily pronounced one; and as its grammar was simple, and its vocabulary small, the trio made rapid strides. When one gives one's whole time and attention to learning a language, the task proceeds apace; but, even under the most favourable circumstances, there are some—"born linguists," one hears them spoken of—who pick it up faster than others. Sandy Carmichael was one of these, and whilst his companions were both labouring in the sloughs behind him, so to speak, he was able to reach back many a helping hand from the firm ground on ahead, and give them a friendly drag, which would help them on towards him.

"Have you found out what this king intends to do with us?" Sneyd asked him one day.

"King Oleron, so Mytto tells me, is waiting till we are all three thoroughly recruited. He does not wish to hurry us or anybody. 'When one year is finished,' he says, 'another begins. The world is very aged now, but it will be older before it dies.'"

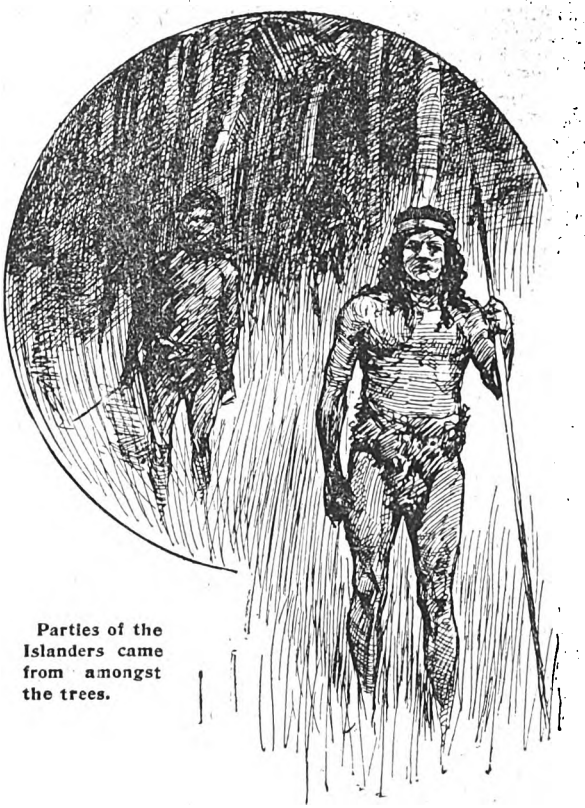
"That's a lazy sort of motto," interrupted Sneyd.

"Faith, it has its charms, let me tell yez," remarked O'Neill, who was lying in his grass hammock, smoking placidly. "It's meself that never knew how pleasant doing nothing was before. Sure, it's born I was to be a gentleman, wid foive hundred a year, an' a man to stand at me elbow wid pipe-lights."

Being naturally one of the most restless and energetic men on the face of the earth, this remark of the Irishman's called forth a smile. However, when he had had his say, Sandy went on afresh.

"When we have got back our full health again, the King wishes us to visit him, and I think, from what Mytto and Maantee let drop, he intends to receive us with all the state he can summon up. That old prophecy rankles in his mind. He has got all the elder men to recall what they can of it, and all their accounts tally with his. The Ermans were warned centuries ago that white men should come to them from a great island in the east, and he is fully persuaded that we are the promised visitors. What he expects from us I cannot say, but that I suppose we shall learn in time."

"And about the priests," Sneyd asked; "what of them? Have they given up their amiable intention of making a



Parties of the Islanders came from amongst the trees.

meal of us, roast, boiled, or grilled? Or is all this high feeding simply to get us into good condition for the table?"

"We need have no fears on that score," responded Sandy. "You saw that tall blear-eyed man who came to pay his respects to-day. Well, he is Ebry, the chief of them. His functions are not altogether priestly. He practises the profession I dabble in. He likewise exercises evil spirits, and he is also head sorcerer of the island. His business is a very lucrative one, and he holds a considerable deal of power in one way and another."

"He's a treacherous, evil-minded blayguard, if ever I saw one," exclaimed O'Neill, raising himself on one elbow and expectorating in disgust. "Those shifty, bloodshot eyes never look yez straight in the face. He's squintin' all over everywhere whilst he's talkin' to yez. Mark me now, we'll have throuble from that sneakin', dirty, feather-bestrewn cannibal yet."

"I didn't like the looks of him either," said Sneyd. "But it won't do to show we take a dislike to the fellow. If he set himself to work our ruin, we can rest assured we should have our work cut out to foil him."

"I think," said Sandy, "he has gained his power more by fear than by love. I pumped Mytto on the subject, but Mytto is either very close, or praises the man up to the skies. When I say anything unfavourable of him or any of the other sorcerers, Mytto looks uneasily around him, and either remains silent, or contradicts what I have been saying, and

adds something complimentary about the fellows as a sort of counterpoise."

"I suspect," said Sneyd, "that Mytto has been told that sometimes trees and rocks have ears; or perhaps he has learned it from personal experience. However, the stocks and stones on Erma are deaf to English, whatever they may be to their own tongue, so we may make personal comments, in a crowd here as safely as we could in a desert elsewhere."

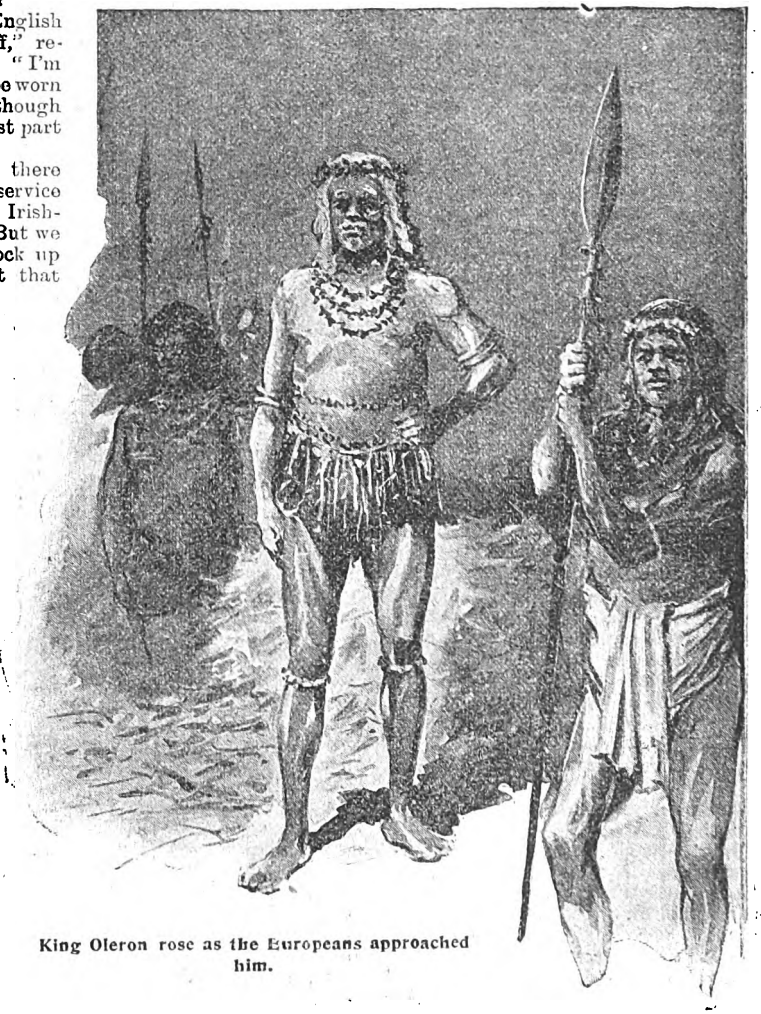
* * * * *

"I wonder how long," said O'Neill one day, "we are going to stay on this island?"

"If we wait for an English ship to take us off," remarked Sneyd drily, "I'm afraid our teeth will be worn out before it comes, although the food's for the most part soft."

"I didn't imagine there was a regular packet service runnin'," replied the Irishman with a grin. "But we should be able to knock up some sort of a craft that would carry us."

"And so go home, aftercalling at Callao for another cargo of dollars?" suggested Sneyd. "The plan is a brilliant one, but it needs a great deal of maturing. We may be able to build a vessel some day, if such a thing be possible with one's fingers, and without a scrap of metal; but that won't be yet awhile. For the present we are alive, and that is a a great deal to be thankful for. We are well treated, which is likewise a subject for gratitude. But on what footing we stand, time alone will show. We may be guests. We may be prisoners. We may be turned into soldiers. We may be made to air our Western knowledge and become tinkers, tailors, blacksmiths, carpenters. Everything depends, so far as I can see, on how Oleron receives us. If we make a good impression on him, so much the better; if not, so much the worse. I don't think our lives are in any danger, though in aboriginal communities, where human life is cheap, one can never be certain upon such a point. 'The favourite of to-day is the felon of to-morrow,' to quote one of Oleron's wise saws given to Sandy at second-hand by friend Mytto. But there is a vast deal of difference between a pleasant life and a hard one. Whilst we are compelled to live amongst these islanders, it would be far better to be their masters than their drudges. Besides, if we were the former, we might find means to build a vessel that would bear us away; but if the latter, we should have no chance whatever of doing such a thing."



King Oleron rose as the Europeans approached him.

"Then," exclaimed the Irishman, "it's meself that'll be dubbed knight at the very laste. Sir Murtagh O'Neill! Faith, it sounds dacenter than the names of better men I've heard. And we'll make Sandy a barrow-knight, and have as our one peer Lawrence, first Earl of Sneyd! Be the powers, av Oleron's got a crown to his name—av he's a rale king, I'm meanin'—'tisn't less he could do for such distinguished sthrangers."

CHAPTER II.

How King Oleron held a state reception: how the three principal visitors were invited to sorcery and luncheon: and how they criticised their host and his clan.

His Majesty King Oleron of Erma was sitting in state in the chief (and only) room of his palace. The palace was a wattle-walled erection some forty feet square, with a high-pitched roof, thatched with flat palm-leaves. It could be simply divided by hanging mats, into a number of smaller apartments; but at present all these barriers were taken down, and the whole was thrown into one large hall.

His majesty was seated cross-legged on a rush-strewn dais at the end furthest from the door. He was a venerable-looking man of about seventy, white-haired, and mild of countenance. On either side of him were grouped his chiefs, all armed with club and lance, and forming a sort of royal body-guard. Save for a gangway down the middle, the rest of the hall was filled with a crowd of islanders of both sexes. All these were decked out in their bravest gala attire—that is, in robes of vari-coloured *tappa*, with chaplets of lovely exotics, and necklaces of shells, for ornament. There were flowers everywhere. Beautiful orchids were strewn over the earthen floor; garlands of orange and lemon blossom hung from the rafters and perfumed the air. Even the King's venerable brow was not without its floral chaplet.

Up through this assembly the three strangers were conducted by the deputation which had been sent for that purpose.

"You do the talking, Sandy," whispered Sneyd, as they drew near the dais. "You are the best Erman scholar of the three of us."

"Oh, I can't," said Sandy, for once losing his habitual

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coolness. "I should never know what to say. No, you must answer him, and then, if you get stuck up for a word, I'll help you out. You know what to say. You're accustomed to this sort of thing. You've talked to the Prince when you were in his army. Whereas this is my——"

"First introduction to royalty, eh, Sandy? Well, I don't see that the court etiquette of unlucky Prince Charlie's camp, which is my only piece of experience in such matters, will be much of a guide for what to say and do here. However, we must try our best. I daresay they won't be over-exacting with strangers."

King Oleron rose as the three Europeans approached him, and laying his hands on the shoulders of each in turn, he touched the stranger's forehead with his own, five times, looking him steadfastly in the eyes meanwhile.

"White men," he said, "from the island whence is born the rising sun, from the land where we believe plenty reigns supreme, welcome to our shores. Though not unprepared for your coming, the exact time of your arrival was unknown to us. A prophecy, given from old to young through unreckoned generations, warned us that white men would come for our comfort, and long have we been expecting you.

"You yourselves doubtless knew not the fate that the gods had in store. Your frail bark got separated from the larger canoe which bore you to these seas, by accident. The finger of the gods led you out on to the trackless ocean. Food was withheld from you, and the clouds gave their rain but sparingly. Till my good Maantee and his canoes brought succour, you were in but sorry plight. Again, see the finger of the gods. Had you reached these shores strong, healthy, in full flesh, you would immediately have begun to repine. We are not as your countrymen. Our tribe is ignorant of many matters which are common knowledge with you. Seeing the depths in which we recline, you would straightway have longed to return. But coming amongst us weak, nerveless, and nigh unto death's door, you found rest, and all our hospitality could provide. No man withheld anything that was his to give. It has seemed to us that the fruits of Erma ripened but for our guests."

The King paused, and Sneyd replied in the most suitable words that came to his call. He thanked the King and his people for their hospitality, and hoped that he and his companions would find some way to requite at least a part of it.

King Oleron acknowledged this little speech, and then made a few more remarks, which Sneyd could not quite catch the drift of. Sandy, being applied to translated:

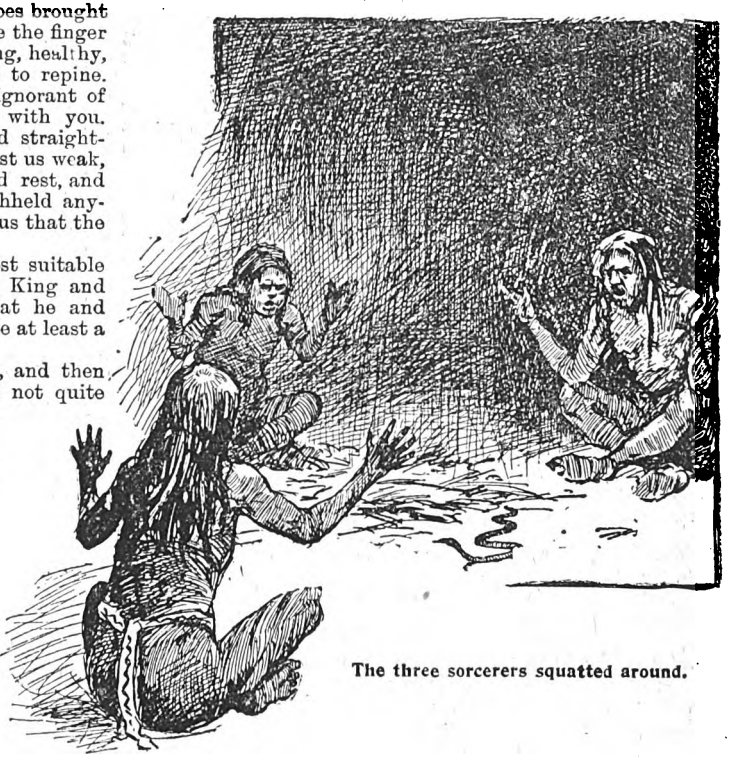
"His majesty says he will show us a short sorcery entertainment, and then hopes for the honour of our company at lunch."—At which free and easy rendering of the monarch's sonorous periods, Sneyd and O'Neill had much ado to restrain themselves from laughing outright. However, they preserved sober countenances, and, seating themselves by invitation on the daïs beside the King, watched what was going forward.

The crowd of spectators had pressed in closely to the wattled walls of the hall, leaving the vacant space in the middle occupied by Ebry and his two chief attendants only. Save for a scanty kirtle of snake-skin round the loins, the three were as naked as they were born, unless one counts heavy black hair, which hung lank and unbound as far down as the middle of their backs. Ebry himself was gaunt and lean. His eyes were lashless and bloodshot. His mouth was large and cruel. His nostrils were wide, and had a way of working in and out. Of the assistants, one was knock-kneed, tall, and melancholy-looking; the other, short, merry-eyed, and pot-bellied; an ill-assorted couple. But, as they soon showed themselves thorough adepts at their work, it may be taken for granted that Ebry knew what he was about when he enrolled them in his guild.

The whole stock-in-trade of the sorcerers was contained in a small covered basket of palm swathes. The ground was bare, and there seemed but little possibility of concealing anything about their persons.

I do not propose to give an account of the whole performance *seriatim*. But one item will serve to show how these knaves contrived to obtain credit for supernatural powers amongst their simple-minded fellow-countrymen.

A handful of short dry reeds was thrown on the floor, and the three sorcerers squatted round it (but at a respectful distance), and set up a droning, monotonous chant. The words were not "understanded of the people." They were not Erman. Very probably they were unadulterated gibberish. But they seemed to act as a spell, and have a creative effect; for presently the dry reeds began to rustle, and from them struggled out a small yellow snake. After a pause, a black snake followed, and then a white one with blood-red spots, and after him, a yellow one with green stripings. Once away from their apparent birthplace the snakes, wriggled across to Ebry, received a caress from his hand, and coiled down peaceably on the floor. Other snakes followed the first in rapid succession, the pile of dried rush diminishing gradually as they came; but at last, when there must have been at least a couple of hundred reptiles in view on the floor, the supply seemed to cease. There



The three sorcerers squatted around.

were scarcely a dozen of the dead straws left, and these were apparently incapable of metamorphosis.

Having got this large supply of material before them, the three conjurors changed their chant to a livelier one, which set the reptiles into violent commotion. The three Europeans fancied that the first process was about to be reversed. But the play was not ended. There was apparently method in the writhings. By slow degrees, and after many futile attempts, a number of the snakes raised themselves on their tails, each twisting round and lending

support to the others. More reptiles spiralled up, and got into position on the top of these, and others above them, till at last the whole two hundred had woven themselves into one living rope of gleaming, breathing bodies, supported solely by its lower end.

Ebry got up, and apparently tested the soundness of the column with his hand. It swayed. A frown crossed his face, and he set up a lively air, which seemed to make the living items of the column bind closer together. He tried it a second time. It was firmer now, but still apparently not strong enough for his purpose, for he broke out with the new song again with redoubled vigour. This at length seemed to have effect; for at the third trial the rope refused to budge, even though the chief sorcerer strained at it with his shoulder till the muscles of his spare body seemed to be bursting through his dark skin.

Standing erect again, and looking at his handiwork for a moment with a satisfied smile, he turned round, and nodded at his shorter assistant. The little pot-bellied man, scrambled to his feet, and advancing to the shining column laid his hand upon it.

"Howly Saint Pathrick!" ejaculated the Irishman, "av yez could have been spared to see this day, 'tis the great destruction yer honour 'ud have made. Av that Dutch bowed little haythen isn't climbin' them live shnakes, may I never handle honest blackthorn more!"

It was as O'Niell had said. With infinite trouble and caution, the stout little fellow was working his way up, finding resting places for toes and fingers in open jaws, and to judge by an occasional grimace which flashed across his rotund features, not unfrequently pricking himself on a projecting fang. Yet the living rope did not budge an inch to his weight, nor did any of the snakes composing it offer to do him the least harm. Unobstructed, he climbed to the top, and, sitting on the blunt point, wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Up to this point, except from the movements of their eyes which flashed and glinted like so many diamonds, it would have been impossible for an onlooker to declare that the reptiles were alive. But now Ebry set up a shrill whistling, and a strange thing happened. The outside snakes resting on the ground unravelled themselves, climbed up, and settled themselves on the fat man's body. One by one, the other snakes forming the pillar followed their example, till the fellow was enveloped in a mass of glittering, sinuous bodies which completely shut him out of sight.

And—here comes the weirdest part of it—the whole, reptiles and man, were apparently suspended in mid-air.

There was no support to be seen hanging from above, and there was certainly no prop from below. It was a marvellously clever piece of jugglery.

"Begob!" exclaimed O'Neill, who was all in a cold sweat, "he's never goin' to lave that dirty bundle stuck up in the air like a new moon, is he?"

"I shouldn't imagine so," returned Sneyd, "but if you wait you'll see. Look, he's lighting a fire now."

The sorcerer had produced a couple of neat little faggots of wood from his basket, which he set light to, apparently, by the simple process of striking them together. Waiting till they blazed clearly, he threw them on the ground, beneath that grotesque evidence of his handiwork which was still balanced in mid-air, and stood back to watch the result.

A clear, yellow, smokeless flame shot up to within a yard of the lowest snakes. In a minute or so, two or three, unable to bear the heat, fell off into the fire, which hissed, and burnt up more fiercely as each writhing body toppled into it. One by one, and sometimes in clusters of five or six, the remaining snakes fell into the blaze and were consumed, and, at last, all had come down. But where was the man? Nowhere in view. There was no visible means of scrambling on to the rafters, which were fully eighteen feet over his head. Indeed, he could not have escaped observation if he had done so, for the sorcerer's fire was a smokeless one, and even the tongues of flame, which were semi-transparent, did not mount more than eight or nine feet from the ground at their highest.

O'Neill had a solution of the mystery in his own mind, for he muttered, "Gobbled up by them sarpints, ivery bone of him, poor misdirected haythen;" but his two companions were not prepared to accept this, and awaited developments.

Ebry had extinguished his fire, and, whilst he carefully collected the ashes into a heap, his remaining assistant went outside, and returned with a large hollow sphere of closely-woven wicker-work. It was so light, that he threw it from the door to the centre of the hall with one jerk of the hand, and the one orifice in its surface was not more than an inch in diameter. Into this small hole, Ebry poured the ashes through a funnel of palm leaf, going over the ground with minute care, time after time, so that not a particle should be left behind. Then, extracting a gourd from his basket, he poured into the sphere a pint or two of colourless liquid—water, probably—and immediately squatted down on his heels, and began to chant. His knock-kneed assistant, *vis-à-vis* to him at the other side of the sphere, took up the chorus vigorously at intervals, and the pair of them then bawled so lustily, that the rafters above rattled again. At the end of a minute or so, the sphere began to tremble, its movements becoming more and more pronounced, till it rolled away a couple of yards, and remained still. The song ceased. A cracking noise was heard. The pot-bellied assistant tore aside the walls of his shell, and stepped out on to the hard, earthen floor.

Without waiting for applause or reward, the sorcerers left their traps, and marched out of the hall, and the crowd began to scatter.

"Well!" said the Irishman, "this beats all my goin' a-fishin'. What's a bhoy to believe av he can't thrust his own eyes? I see that fat little spalpeen go aloft, as clear as I see his honour the King sittin' down on his hunkers beside us. I see them bastely sarpints cover him up. I see the sarpints fall down, one by one, an' made sure it's ate he was. And now here he is again, as lively as a dog-fish, an' twice as ugly."

"Ebry is more than man," said the King in the Erman language.

"Ebry is a precious sight less than man, to my way o' thinkin'," remarked O'Neill in his own tongue. "There must be a sthrong cross of the snake in his breedin'. An' being brought up wid a dacent hatred o' reptiles, 'tis meself that's going to give him a wide berth."

"Well, don't pass any more comments just now," said Sneyd, "or some of these good people will be making a shrewd guess at the gist of your remarks. You've rather an expressive face, O'Neill, and there's Mytto I can see for one who has been reading it."

"Mytto's welcome to what he's seen. It's the dacent bhoy he is, and he'll not be afther runnin' about makin' mischief. But here's that ugly baste Ebry himself coming back, and whilst he's contagious I'll kape me figure-head as wooden as Sandy's own."—With which wise remark, Murtagh O'Neill relapsed into silence.

The scene of the feast was not roofed in by a cover of man's thatching. The Ermans ate their state repasts *sub Jove calido*. To ward off the too piercing beams of the tropical sun, they had chosen a spot in a palm grove, where the great leaves interlaced overhead, and formed a cool, deep shade. The soft, springy turf had been covered with freshly plucked ferns, whose aromatic stems, when bruised underfoot, diffused a delicious odour. Upon two long rows of sort brown mats the feasters reclined or sat, facing one another. Between these were thick, over-lapping layers of *pooroi* leaves, forming a neat green table-cloth. The table appointments were simple. Knives and forks there were none. A broad banana leaf, with the mid-rib withdrawn, served each feaster as a plate; there was a half cocoanut full of sea-

water at his elbow, by way of salt; and fingers did the rest, unless he liked to use a piece of bread-fruit, roasted crisp as toast, to assist in conveying the food to his mouth.

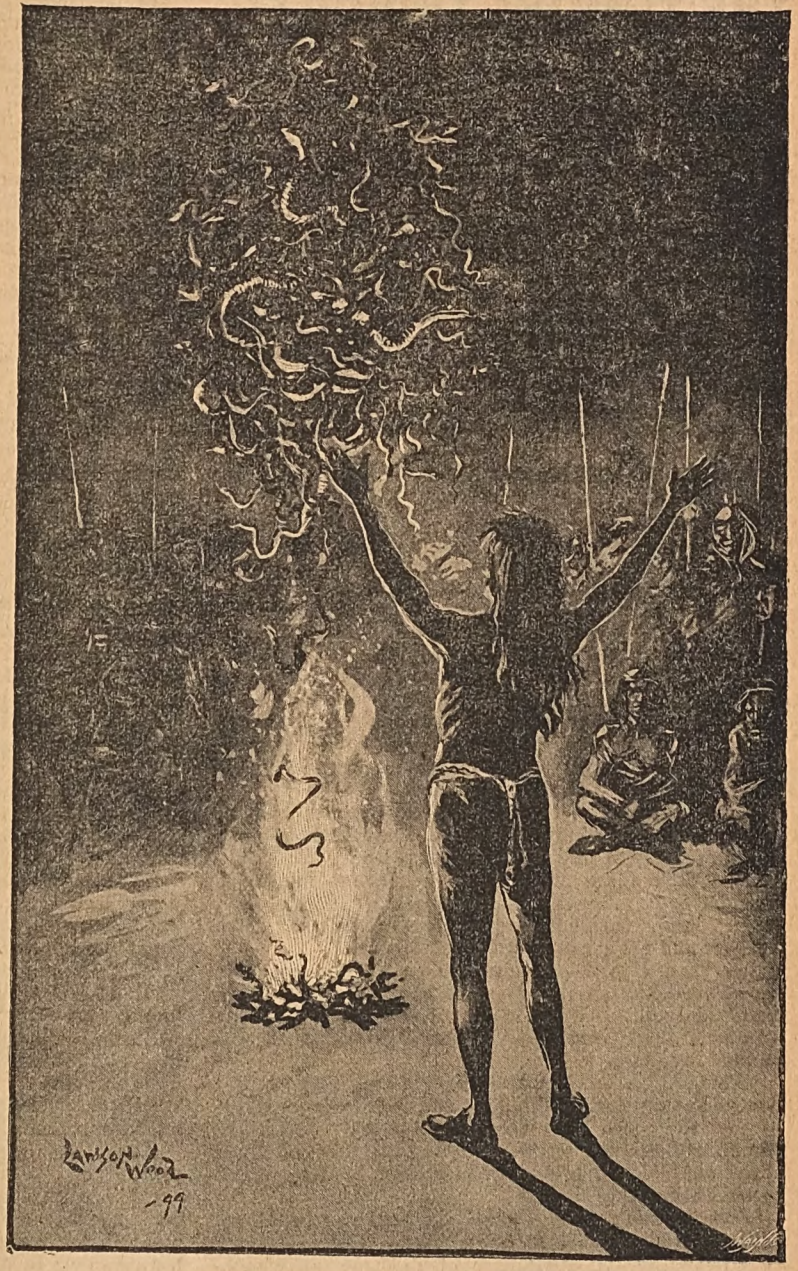
The food was in barbaric profusion. There were huge calabashes containing fowls, lobsters, prawns, and fish. Each portion was wrapped in folds of leaves, and was served up smoking hot from an adjacent earth oven, done to a turn. There were great gourds full of yellow *poce*, a pudding made from the mountain plantain. There were others of *feeiis*, a sort of turnip, pounded to pulp, and baked with cocoanut milk. There were pyramids of young cocoanuts, unhusked, and punched ready for drinking, piled up like shot in an arsenal yard. And in and amongst the other viands were great stacks of ripe fruit—portly bananas, in bright buff jackets; avees, with cheeks like a blushing girl; luscious guavas, with the shadows of their ruddy pulp flushing through a transparent skin; delicate, thin-skinned oranges, tinted in patches a rich nut-brown; and here and there a great, jolly alderman of a melon, which rolled about from very portliness. Such a heap! fairly bursting with condition, like the rich tropical soil from which they sprung.

The three Europeans could not use their fingers as the *habitués* did. The islanders conveyed each morsel to their mouths without soiling any part of the hand beyond the mere finger-tips. When the guests attempted to imitate them, they found the grease trickling down to their very elbows. But such trifling matters of detail affected nobody very much.

The excellence of the feast absorbed undivided attention. The prawns and lobsters were delicious. The fish and fowls were beyond compare. The method of cooking in the ground, though slow and tedious, preserves all the juices, and renders the meat so treated exceedingly sweet and tender. The roasted bread-fruit was as crisp as toast. The fruits were a poem; and the juice of the young green cocoanuts was cool and refreshing as iced champagne.

The feast ended, attendant Hebes spirited away the *débris*, and then others, a choir of island sirens, sang a rhythmical, monotonous chant, which, being in keeping with the surroundings, was thoroughly pleasing.

Everything had a restful air. There was no hurry and bustle, either in earth, air, or amongst the inhabitants thereof. The trade-wind soughed gently amongst the trees, wafting their scents across the grove. The pendant orchids swung slowly hither and back. The faint but deep diapason of the surf, pounding on the distant barrier-reef formed a fitting bass for the sweet tender treble of the singers.



One by one the snakes fell into the fire.

Sneyd and O'Neill, at any rate, were enjoying themselves.

There was a flavour of the lotus in the dish; but the taste was not displeasing to them. Sandy Carmichael alone of the company was restless. His recent life on board ship had not prepared him for such slothful indulgence; and certainly the former training of Duncan Carmichael had been far too austere to put him in tune with it.

(To be continued.)

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

VIII.

Mr. Timmins and the Sticking Plaster.

"My dear," cooed Mrs. Timmins as she rushed into her husband's dressing-room, tripped over the water jug, and butted him furiously in the back, "have you got them again?"

"Got 'em again," yelled Mr. Timmins, as he dug his razor into his chin, and upset the scalding water over his hand, "got what?"

"My keys, of course," put in Mrs. Timmins sweetly.

"That's it," gurgled Mr. Timmins, dancing round the room and pressing both hands to his chin. "D'ye think I've taken your keys to shave with? P'raps you think I can't scrape along without them. Don't stand grinning there, bring me some plaster. Quick! Don't you see I've cut myself? Can't you understand I've ploughed off half my chin?"

"Oh, let me see," screamed Mrs. Timmins, dancing up to him and grabbing at his arm. "Gracious, what a nasty scratch! Wait a minute and I'll get some plaster."

"Think it is, do you?" raved Mr. Timmins, grinding his heel on the floor. "Call it a scratch, do you? I like that. I like to hear you sweetly chattering whilst I bleed to death. Don't hurry. It won't make any difference, you know. You wouldn't like to say you left me at the last minute, would you? Maybe you like to see the blood. P'raps you think the colour suits me!" and Mr. Timmins stopped for want of breath.

Mrs. Timmins shot into her bedroom. "Where can I have put that plaster?" she moaned, as she trod on the cat's tail and knocked her head against the mantelpiece. "I put it—oh, where did I put it?"

"Hurry up, can't you," roared Mr. Timmins, rolling on the couch in agony. "No, on second thoughts I wouldn't hurry, it might spoil your record. You only want a little more steam, and Mr. Bosmo Consor as director, to be a South-Eastern express. Court plaster, I say. Bring me that court plaster before I pull down the wall and get some from the neighbours."

Just then, Mrs. Timmins remembered. It occurred to her she had hid the plaster in the clock. "Here it is, dear," she said. "Don't make such a fuss. I can't get it quicker than I can," and she snapped a bit off and handed it to him.

"That's it," cried Mr. Timmins, "p'raps you think I don't want my hand to hold my chin. P'raps you'd like to see the gore flow down my neck!" And Mr. Timmins took away his hand and a little drop of blood oozed out. Then he put the plaster on his tongue and pressed hard upon the cut.

When he had sucked off half the gum and swallowed it, Mr. Timmins picked out the plaster. "Come off that," he croaked, as the sticking plaster formed an attachment for his finger. Then it stuck to the other finger.

"Oh, you would, would you?" yelled Mr. Timmins, as he jabbed away at the cut. But the plaster was new at the work, and hung close to the digit. Mr. Timmins began to get a little ruffled. He was an amiable man by disposition, but this was a bit too much.

"What's the matter with the measly business? Come off, I say!" And as he plucked the plaster off his finger it grew to his thumb. "Stick, will ye?" he shrieked, pressing it to his cut with all the energy he could muster. "Leave go that thumb!" and he whirled round on his heel and pegged away again.

As he turned he caught sight in the glass of Mrs. Timmins giggling. He turned on his trembling wife.

"You think I'm a variety show, do you?" he yelled, stamping his foot on the ground. "Maybe you think I'm doing this for fun. What are you laughing at, anyway? Have you never seen a bit of plaster stick before? Who asked you to stop at all? How can I see to put the thing on while you're standing in the light? Perhaps you think you only want a piece of putty and a sash with the paint off to make you a window pane." And Mr. Timmins stopped for a minute to take breath.

"And who asked you for a leech?" he went on, his voice rising with his temperature. "Can't you bring me something that knows the difference between a finger and a chin when it sees 'em?" and he jammed his finger on the cut again.

"Shall I cut you another piece, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins mildly. "Would you like to try a fresh strip with more stickiness on it?"

"No, I wouldn't," shouted Mr. Timmins. "D'ye think I want to make my dinner off that beastly gum? Haven't I sucked enough already?" He worked away again, and this time the plaster slipped off suddenly, and stuck to the corner of his mouth.

"That's right," said Mrs. Timmins pleasantly, hoping to secure peace in the family, "that's capital now."

"You think it is, do you?" raved Mr. Timmins with a fearful grin. "Maybe you think the mouth was cut by the razor. P'raps you're under the impression that this hole in my visage was meant to be shut up with a little bit of plaster. Come off, will you? Let go that mouth, or I'll call in the police!" And as he gave the plaster a wipe it stuck to the back of his hand.

"Let me try," put in Mrs. Timmins; "I know exactly how to do it."

"Then why didn't you say so before? Why didn't you do it at first?" roared the wretched man. "What did you want to wait for till I'd lost nearly every drop of blood in my body? Oh, you know how to do it! Of course you do!

"You only want a little Gregory powder and some death certificates to be a doctor. You'd just love to pull it all about, and make it bleed again. I know you. Stand off there, can't you? Stick, you grinning rascal!" And Mr. Timmins clapped the wrong hand over his jaw. "I'll hold you there till you do stick, if I have to hold you there till my wife learns something."

And Mr. Timmins pranced up the room again, his face full of emotion and expressive of the most stern determination.

"Do let me have a look, ducky," pleaded Mrs. Timmins, waltzing round him.

Gently she drew away his hand and substituted a piece of plaster with a deftness which did her credit.

"There, I thought my piece would stick that time," screamed Mr. Timmins with a delighted chuckle, looking at his hand and finding the plaster not there. "You always come in after the funeral. You're always only, only, only just too late. So like a woman."

"I fancy you'll find your bit of plaster on the other hand," said Mrs. T. pleasantly.

"Of course you know," snorted Mr. Timmins, having ascertained by a covert glance that his wife was right. "If I had your foresight and a glass I'd put a brass plate on my front and be a 'metalogical' office, and forecast the weather."

And Mr. Timmins, who evidently meant meteorological, wore that piece of blood-stained plaster all day rather than admit by taking it off that his wife had been right for once.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER LI.

The Electric Rifle.

A glance at the accompanying map will show that Lord Roberts had well chosen the position of his advanced lines. He practically held the whole of the Seine Valley in front of the forts at Marly and Cormeilles, two of the strongest fortified posts in the *banlieue* of Paris.

Had the French been wise enough to convert the Plateau de l'Hautie, on the north bank of the Seine, into another Plevna redoubt, as they had always intended to do since the Franco-German War of 1870-1, the British would not so easily have gained a footing in close proximity to the outer ceinture of the fortifications of Paris.

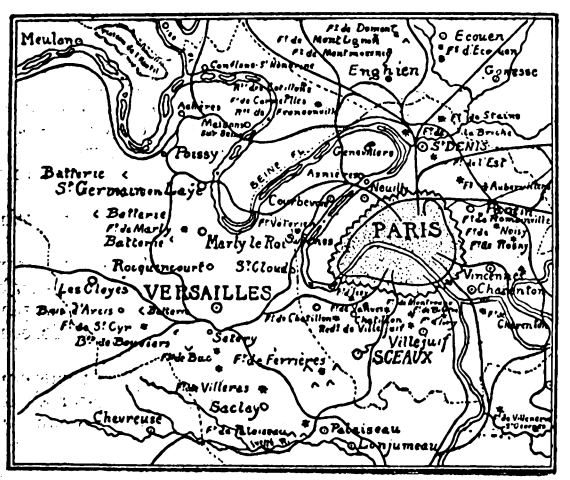
But the Germans were at Versailles almost before the Parisians realised that the investment of their beloved capital was really about to be accomplished, and now the English Moltke had gripped the city whilst its inhabitants were still talking of driving him into the sea.

Nevertheless, the task essayed by the British Commander-in-Chief was infinitely more arduous than that set to his predecessor.

The Germans were called upon to besiege a strong fortress which required investing lines of forty miles in length: Lord Roberts, to achieve his ends by the same means would need to inclose a circle of 125 miles.

To state the nature of the undertaking is to demonstrate its impracticability, and the hero of Kandahar was not the man to waste time upon the impossible. Paris was either to be carried by a *coup*, or not carried at all.

Already arrangements were in progress for strong reinforcements to be sent from the two German expeditions, now set at liberty, and Sir Redvers Buller was rapidly making his way through Southern France. But the skilled soldier who had borne the brunt of war well knew that if his plan succeeded he had enough troops and to spare for the purpose. If it failed, he was in no worse position than before, as he did not intend to uselessly spend the lives of his men once he became convinced of the inutility of his project.



Delay was consequently undesirable. It only gave the enemy time to put his house in order; and if the sole means of subjugating France was to ignore the capital for a time and continue to overrun the provinces, it was obvious that the non-success of an assault in no way altered the general situation.

General Saussier, the Governor of Paris, and generalissimo of the French forces, considered that his adversary had placed himself in an untenable position by occupying the Achères-Poissy line.

It will be seen that, as the bird flies, a direct assault upon the environs of Paris was out of the question. Three times does the Seine interpose its sinuous course between the Achères plateau and the walls of the capital.

Every position north and south of the river is covered by forts deemed impregnable. The French commander scouted the idea of an attack by the south, with Marly, St. Cyr, Versailles, Chatillon, and the rest blocking the way, whilst a rapid crossing at Conflans, with the objective of a northerly attack by the St. Denis side, although the only remaining method open for an advance, was surely impossible through country dominated by such strongholds as Cormeilles, Cotillons, Franconville, Montmorency, Montlignon, and Domont.

In a word, General Saussier and his staff were in absolute ignorance of Lord Roberts's intentions or their conceivable development, so they contented themselves with perfecting the telephonic and telegraphic communications between the outlying forts and the inner circle, with its three huge entrenched camps, and there waited impatiently until a definite move by the assailant might enable them to crush him with greater certainty.

They had not long to wait.

When Lord Roberts had armed two Special Service Corps, of 50,000 men each, with Mr. Thompson's electric rifle—this being its common but misleading name—and their commanders, Generals Massy and Alleyne respectively, were able to assure him that the troops were perfectly acquainted with its novel properties, he resolved forthwith to put the weapon to the supreme test of active service.

There could be no question of its efficiency. Repeated experiment had demonstrated this beyond the domain of doubt. The one point that could only be determined by a battle was its moral effect upon the enemy.

Here, it is true, opinions differed, but Lord Roberts believed in the invention as fully as did Lord Wolseley, and both distinguished soldiers were more enthusiastic in this respect than Mr. Thompson himself, for he modestly declaimed the authority of an expert in warfare.

It is now time to disclose the exact nature of this remarkable arm, whose prime quality was that it rendered hostilities by night far more deadly than during a similar battle by day.

Mr. Thompson had left the Lee-Metford magazine rifle untouched internally. He had only added a small but intensely powerful electric lamp, which fitted easily on to the flanges of the back-sight.

So far there was nothing in the idea save a neat adaptation of the search light, with its motive power derived from a simple, tiny, and well-constructed battery, charged with a voltage sufficient to burn for four hours if constantly in use. A spare coil, carried with the ammu-

nition, could readily be applied by the soldier whilst in action. Thus eight hours of continuous service was secured, and it was computed that even in the hottest engagement the intervals obtained by the fact that each shot fired extinguished the light automatically until it was again brought into play by the user, would yield a total period of twelve hours' duration of service.

But Mr. Thompson was a skilled optician, in addition to his professional attainments as an electrical engineer.

What he had done, unaided, was to solve the many problems attending the refraction of light.

An ordinary search lamp invariably spreads its beams in a V, and even this concentration is only obtained by reflectors, which compel the rays to travel in a definite direction, rather than follow their natural diffusion towards all points of a sphere.

After years of untiring endeavour this quiet and unassuming genius had discovered a means of refracting, or literally breaking, the rays of light, by passing them through a double prism at their only avenue of outlet, whereby they all travelled in almost parallel lines.

The result was that at a distance of fifty, eighty, or even one hundred yards, the radius covered by the powerful illuminant within the lamp did not exceed a circle of six inches in diameter.

It was a mere matter of adjustment to obtain the subsequent result that a bullet fired from a rifle accurately fitted with one of these lamps should lodge in the centre of the area covered by the light.

It did not matter how the rifle was held or fired. Let that murderous ray rest for an instant upon any appreciable object the pressure of the trigger made it mathematically certain that in the same fraction of a second the projectile was lodged in the precise locality illumined by the lamp.

There could be no mistake, or deviation, or wavering.

If the holder of the weapon were gifted with ordinary eyesight, he could be quite positive that where the light fell, there could he strike.

No wonder, then, that Lord Roberts was eager to try this portentous arm under its own peculiar conditions—for the darker the night, the more effective it became—now that Lord Wolseley fully approved of his telegraphed resolution to attack Paris immediately.

There were no guns of position with the British army, for the reason already detailed—that a regular siege of the French capital at this stage of the war must have savoured of the grotesque.

On the fifth day after the memorable sortie, when Lord Roberts had received intelligence of the sailing from Hamburg of 50,000 men of the Duke's forces, and the whole of the recently arrived contingent from the United States and Canada, he gave orders for a strong artillery attack to be made on the French positions dominated by the Forts de Cormeilles, des Cotillons, and de Franconville.

To engage in a duel with the magnificent ordnance contained in those fortresses would, of course, only mean the annihilation of the British field guns. But by constant change of position, by utilising the cover of trees in the well-wooded ground on the left bank of the Seine, and by constant effort to discount the range of the stationary monsters in the fixed batteries, the British gunners were able to avoid considerable loss whilst very materially annoying the French infantry.

Two British divisions were also sent to the front to keep things moving, and when he heard the news General Saussier exclaimed, whilst being lifted on to his horse:

"St Denis, then! It is well. These English will be butchered."

In the north, the French army was agog with excitement. Train after train conveyed troops along the railway of the Grande Ceinture, and an imposing army of soldiers quickly gathered at Enghien, behind the fort now intermittently engaged by the British artillery.

Lord Roberts paid not the slightest heed to the proceedings in this quarter.

At midday he inspected the two Special Service Corps, which were drawn up on some level land close to the Seine at Poissy.

He was fully satisfied with the appearance and constitution of the twenty strong brigades into which they were divided.

At midday he inspected the two Special Service Corps.

They were soon dismissed from the parade and advised to take complete rest until 8.30 p.m., when a good meal would be served to them.

A general muster was ordered for 9.30.

It was eleven o'clock before the sounds of continuous firing by the French pickets at St. Germain en Laye apprised the defenders of any more towards the south. And it was here that the British received their first convincing impression of the terrible effect of the new rifle.

When they came to close quarters with a French division they found that instead of indulging in the desultory and uncertain nature of fighting in the dark, they could act with a precision that could not possibly be attained during the hours of daylight.

Not only did every missile lodge in the body of an opponent, but there was no wild and indiscriminate firing; ammunition was not thrown away, and effective response was impossible, as the piercing rays from the lamps blinded their opponents whenever they strove to come to close quarters.

To say that the French were seized with panic would be to do an injustice to brave and determined men. They were simply bewildered, amazed, unable to grasp the significance of the infernal device which smote them so infallibly, yet offered no tangible explanation of its frightful qualities to their scattered senses.

Regiments simply melted away before those demoniac rays that brought death the moment they were sighted.

A hasty retreat behind the Fort de Marly was not so much a terrified rout as a yielding to the unseen and inevitable. Men could not stand before this unknown element in warfare; they fled or died.

Prior to the attack the Commander-in-Chief had most carefully revised the complete scheme of operations with the divisional Generals and their brigadiers. The first division was charged with the capture, if possible, of the formidable Fort de Marly, with its seven huge batteries. Special brigades were told off to deal with the two strong redoubts on its left and the battery in rear.

The second division, led by Lieutenant-General Alleyne, when assured of the probable success of Massy's undertaking, in which it bore no part, was to march with all speed over the next five miles and attack the Battery and Fort of St. Cyr, the Batteries des Bouviers, and the two Forts de Buc.

By field telegraph the Commander-in-Chief should be constantly apprised of the progress of events, and 200,000 men were ready at midnight to march off to complete the occupation of all positions taken from the enemy.

Everything, of course, in this remarkable programme depended upon the demoralising influence of the new arm, but it was not to be expected that the troops could unaided climb bastions, cross outworks, and *glacis*, or swim ditches.

Each brigade carried with it a large number of light but solid gangways, constructed upon the principle of a fire-escape. With these the broadest moats and the highest walls could be surmounted either on the level or at a steep gradient. The wheels were so arranged that one gangway

could cross over another, whilst three of these novel scaling-ladders, placed side by side, formed a fairly broad road.

The first experiment was made with the detached battery lying three miles north-west of the Fort de Marly.

It was taken whilst its guns were still roaring forth their opening message of defiance.

There was no earthly chance of a reasonable defence being made. No portion of a human body could show itself on bastion or in embrasure, but an ounce of lead was promptly planted therein.

A company of Zouaves flung themselves desperately down an escarpment to prevent a lodgment being affected by one of the scaling ladders. They were shot down to a man within half a minute.

The first real difficulty presented itself when the leading division reached the precincts of the gigantic Fort de Marly. Here a number of search-lights swept the landscape and gave the gunners an opportunity to make good practice at a distance.

They were shot down to a man.

The British loss was severe during the advance, but the moment that the attackers got within striking distance the position was at once reversed.

Acting under the orders of their officers, the men devoted their attention solely to the apparatus of the searchlights. When these were turned upon the assailants, both officers and men were promptly rendered powerless by the glare, but from precisely the same cause a strong shadow was cast on the machine for the benefit of those not within its radius, and a few telling shots sufficed to knock it to pieces.

Thenceforth the work degenerated into mere slaughter.

The hopelessness of the business infected even the bravest spirits in the French army. From out of the gloom a man suddenly perceived a jet of bright light dart towards him.

It flashed for an instant upon his breast, or arm, or head, or thigh, and quicker than consciousness itself came the dull crunch of a projectile, the vivid ray disappeared in the void whence it sprung, whilst the surrounding darkness deepened into insensibility, perchance into eternity.

So sudden and awful were the different attacks and so unexampled in the rapidity of their final achievement, that General Saussier might rave and storm as he chose at his telegraphists—they could seldom get a second answer from the locality indicated by the first message which announced the advance of the British.

From the Fort de Marly several communications of a vague and conflicting nature were received, as the extent of its area demanded a protracted conflict before it could be occupied even under the weird and uncanny conditions of this unprecedented conflict between helpless humanity and implacable science.

"The English are attacking in force, but are suffering heavy loss under our splendid fire," clicked the telegraph.

Five minutes later:

"Regret to inform you that No. 3 Battery and the Moscow Redoubt have been captured."

"What folly is this?" roared the astounded General. "Captured? Is it an affair of pigeons, then? Ask that ma'man to leave the instrument."

"It is but too true," came the reply in answer to a furious question. "Colonel Berthier attempted their recapture, but survivors say that everyone is bewitched Nos. 1, 2, and 5 batteries have fallen. The Commandant is here. He wishes to say——"

Silence.

Never again did General Saussier get word or sign from the superb fort that controlled the wide plateau of Marly, save the stern summons sent to him at dawn, when its guns were turned upon Mont Valerien and Meudon.

The telephone from Versailles was even more dramatic.

Although the chief of the staff of the Fifth Army Corps was in personal communication with his leader, he could say nought of value. The noise of the fighting to the north could be heard plainly enough, but the officer was quite unable to explain the sudden cessation of the big guns at Marly, or the wholly unaccountable collapse of its associated batteries and redoubts.

General Saussier was at St. Denis, many miles from the scene of action, and he was nearly beside himself with rage. He thundered fierce questions and fiercer denunciations along the wire, but his auditor could only answer that he had sent off many mounted messengers to make inquiries.

At last he assured the chief that there could be no doubt concerning the fate of St. Germain and Marly. They were held by the British, but how or why this unwarrantable collapse had occurred he could not tell.

Ha! more news. Versailles itself was attacked. Now he could promise precise intelligence. There was heavy firing at the front. Troops were being hurried up in support. They were so numerous and so skilfully disposed that the British must be hurled back.

What was this? A retreat! Yes, a disgraceful panic. Men rushed by saying that the English fought with bottled lightning.

Sorry, but he must really go outside and take his position with the troops.

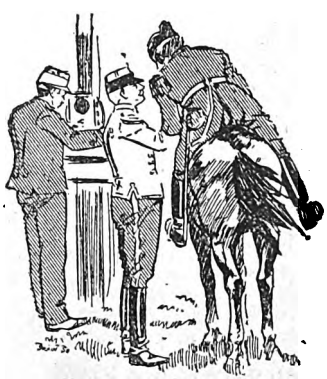
He did not replace the receivers upon the switches, and his perplexed inferior, now quite dumfounded with surprise, plainly heard the sounds of musketry, the cries of the combatants, and the indescribable noise of conflict.

But these indications of passing events soon died away and Versailles was thenceforth mute.

Saussier thought he must certainly be losing his wits when in rapid succession came news of irreparable disaster at Bouviers, de Buc, Bois d'Arcis, and Satory.

It was now almost dawn. Surely something could be done. Were the unparalleled fortifications of Paris made of gossamer then, that they fell thus before the breath of the invader's nostrils? He must go personally and ascertain the precise extent and significance of the night's transactions.

A special train brought the French leader and his staff by the inner circle railway to the Fort d'Issy, and here they awaited the growing daylight with an impatience and dismay ever heightened by the receipt of disjointed reports, all couched in the phraseology of unexplained but complete disaster.



He thundered fierce questions along the wire.

Troops might gallop, or march, or be carried by train across Paris from St. Denis, or Pantin, or Vincennes, pouring in seemingly countless multitudes towards the south-west—when they reached Chatillon and Vanvres they only found themselves subjected to a pitiless hail of lead from fortifications which yesterday were the brass bosses upon their apparently impenetrable shield.

And if one night of mysterious horror could achieve so much, what might not the next witness.

General Saussier hoped that his self-torturing questions would be answered by a friendly bullet.

CHAPTER LII.

Paris Taken.

"Will you not sleep, sir, for a little while?" said a member of Lord Roberts' staff, as he gazed anxiously at the deep lines and haggard expression in the Chief's face during a momentary lull in the furious artillery duel that had been in progress all day between the Forts de Buc and D'Issy.

They were seated in a bomb-proof building within the first-named fortification, and had been eagerly scrutinising a complete plan of the southern defences of Paris which was found in the Commandant's quarters.

Long had they pondered over different expedients, until the English general's weary eyes, which he had not closed in rest for thirty-six hours, refused for the time to carry to his active brain the meaning of the lines and dots and shaded sections that signified so much, yet were so complex in their minuteness.

"Try and lay down for at least an hour," urged his sympathetic companion. "You may break down to-night, and think what that means to us."

Lord Roberts smiled—so pleasantly that for an instant the shadow of overpowering responsibility was driven from his brow.

"It is very good of you, Everett," he said. "I will follow your advice if you tell me what rest means."

Rest, with his iron grip on Paris, with 400,000 British troops even now making final preparations for the supreme effort of the campaign, with half a million of frenzied opponents bracing every nerve to repel the blow which they knew must fall that night—rest, with the thoughts of the civilised world centred upon the undertaking to which he was committed — rest under such conditions could only be found in reckless abandonment to all-engrossing work.

To strive to court sleep would be but to yield to maddening anxiety.

So Colonel Everett did not press the point, nor did he attempt a definition.

After shading his eyes with his hand for a brief space, Lord Roberts continued:

"Saussier, of course, is cramming every available man into Southern Paris between the Seine at Point-du-Jour and the Pont National."

"That may be regarded as certain," assented the other.

"It is the best thing he can do, in our interest."

"May I ask why you think so, sir?" said Colonel Everett, somewhat surprised by the remark.

"Because his troops will learn more easily the full details of last night's operations. What should you think, Everett, if you knew that when darkness fell you would be attacked by a courageous enemy whose mere coming meant death, by some mysterious device, to every combatant encountered?"

"Well, sir," said that officer with a laugh, "for my own part I should look to you for orders."

The Commander-in-Chief waved aside the compliment. "Under such circumstances," he replied, "I fear that my only plan would be to head the first regiment detailed to meet the assault."

"If that be Saussier's notion," said Everett, "our men will oblige him readily, for he is as big as the side of a house. They can't miss him."

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lieutenant-General Alleyne.

"I came along to assure you," he explained, "that the Special Service Corps is eager to be at work again. My chief difficulty has been to keep out the crowds of volunteers to fill our small casualty list, and Massy tells me——"

"Why aren't you in bed?" demanded Lord Roberts suddenly.

"In bed!" The divisional leader spoke as though he had never heard of such a locality.

"Yes. Be off at once and get some hours' sleep. A nice mess we shall be in if you are knocked up to-night. And tell Massy the same thing. Not another word, please. See me here at ten."

His lordship evidently feared that his companion might say something when Alleyne had retired, for he added peremptorily:

"Get me the parade states, Colonel Everett, from every division to hand, and ask the Intelligence Department to clearly mark on a sketch map the present location of every brigade."

Colonel Everett met the Adjutant-General outside.

"Don't say a word to the Chief about his looking tired," he whispered, "or he'll snap your head off."

The Adjutant-General got safely away, and was succeeded by Harington.

Now, Lord Roberts had a soft place in his heart for the handsome young guardsman, from whom all traces of his recent disablement had disappeared, and as he really felt thoroughly fatigued, he said, graciously enough:

"Tell me, Harington, what you would recommend. I cannot sleep, but I want a pick-me-up."

Teddy looked at his superior, and noted his utterly worn appearance. As usual, he came straight to the point.

"If I were you, sir," he said, "I would have a good wash."

The Chief was delighted with the notion. It had never struck him. By rummaging around they discovered the materials, and when a blissful moment of relief had come from a liberal application of cold water, his lordship suddenly cried:

"Had another letter from the girl to-day?"

Harington was ready this time.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "Irene is a marvellous woman. I don't believe anyone but herself could have got a note through from the hospital depôt to-day, or even found out where I was. But it turned up all right an hour ago."

"Did she say anything special?"

"Only that she hoped I would not be hurt during the street fighting in Paris to-night."

"Ah, she thinks we'll get there, then. Anything else?"

"Nothing of general interest, sir."

If anxiety blended with confidence and happy augury was thus to be found within the British lines, a very different state of affairs obtained in the beleaguered city.

Four of the five great railway termini on the north bank of the Seine were crowded with terrified fugitives. Pretence was now thrown to the winds, and distracted men, resolved personally to stay and give their lives in defence of the capital, were nevertheless madly endeavouring to dispatch their loved ones to places of safety.

Appalling scenes occurred at the Gare de l'Est and Gare de Vincennes, which were thronged with frenzied multitudes, and matters became so serious that at last the railway authorities imperatively demanded military protection, and refused to send out any more trains.

(To be continued.)

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE

N. I.—There is no pay attached to the Premiership, because it is not an office under the Crown. The Prime Minister usually holds some office and draws the salary attached to the position. Thus, Lord Salisbury is Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The post generally occupied is that of First Lord of the Treasury.

Liber.—The public libraries of Europe contain a total of 23,000,000 volumes; those of America are credited with a total of 50,000,000.

S. C.—A German meteorologist says that the early years of the next century, now so close, will have extraordinarily hot summers. He arrives at this conclusion from a theory which he has evolved concerning the weather. During certain periods of time, ranging over something like fifteen years, there is a series of warm years and one of cold years, during which the summers become increasingly hot and the winters correspondingly mild, and *vice versâ*. Of course, when the height is reached the heat or cold diminishes, and he is of opinion that the maximum heat is approaching.

J. P.—Jaffa is the seaport of Jerusalem; that is, it is the port to which go and come those things which are sent to and from the Holy City. It is about forty-seven miles from Jerusalem, and is one of the oldest cities in Asia. Indeed, Pliny says it existed before the Flood, and others derive its name from Japhet, the son of Noah.

Dia.—The following is given by an expert as an easy way of testing the genuineness of diamonds: Make a dot with a lead pencil on a piece of paper and look at it through the diamond. If the dot shows clearly, the stone is good; but if it appears scattered, or if you see more than one dot, your diamond is not genuine.

B.—The only Poet Laureate compelled to resign the position was John Dryden, who was appointed in 1670, and resigned upon the accession of William and Mary. This was not for incapacity, but for religious and political reasons.

H.—The humming bird, according to an eminent authority, can fly backwards. The bird almost lives in the air, in which element it performs all kinds of evoluti ns with the greatest ease.

D.—Your friend is right; the county of Durham did not have the power of sending representatives to Parliament till 1673. That was owing to the fact that it was a county Palatine, and was under the jurisdiction of its Bishop. The supremacy of the Bishop was such that on several occasions an army was raised by him in the Palatinate.

H. F.—By no means. Many bacteria, instead of being harmful, are beneficial, and act as scavengers in our internal economy, thus preventing disease. We have it on high authority that the flavour of the butter and cheese made in Essex and Devonshire is due to the presence of bacteria, and up to the present time I have not heard that these products are particularly injurious.

Art.—It has been estimated by a large dealer in artificial limbs that about 30,000 persons in the United Kingdom have lost one or both legs.

A. T.—Bath money forms an important item in the Turkish marriage contract. The intended husband agrees to allow the lady a certain sum for bathing purposes; if this is at any time withheld, she has only to go to the cadi and turn her slipper upside down. That official at once investigates matters, and, if the grievance is not redressed, it is considered a good ground for divorce.

C. B.—The most costly tomb in the world is that erected for Mahomet. The diamonds and other precious stones with which it is decorated are worth £2,000,000.

Right.—The right hand, which is more sensitive to the touch than the left, is less sensitive than the latter to heat and cold.

"Who was it who said that he knew a city where the inhabitants dwelt on the tops of trees, and to which city did he refer?" Thus writes N. E. V. ———Erasmus, the philosopher, thus described Amsterdam. The tree-tops are the piles on which the buildings are erected. The palace, built in 1618 as the town hall, rests on more than thirteen thousand piles. Amsterdam, one of the most important of commercial cities, rests literally on tree-tops.

L.—The depreciation of the value of the silver currency, through waste of metal in circulation of the various pieces, is estimated to be equal to £11,000 annually.

N.—The system you mention is adopted in the German schools. There the bright pupils are separated from the less capable ones and pass to higher studies, while the others plod on to the best of their ability. In this way the dull pupils are not crammed injuriously, and their cleverer schoolfellows are not retarded in their progress. Medical men do the sorting.

H. K.—The custom of burying or depositing the heart of a prominent man in some place quite apart from the rest of his body is not altogether dead, even in highly civilised countries. The heart of Gambetta, the French statesman, was deposited under a statue erected in his honour eight or nine years ago in Paris.

D. W.—In the convent cemetery of St. Petersburg there is a grave or tomb which is simply a glass house with a crypt. In the latter rests the infant daughter of wealthy parents, who had the body embalmed and placed in a coffin with a pane of glass inserted in the lid just over the face. For years they visited the crypt daily. They are now dead, but are buried elsewhere.

O. D. is alarmed—unnecessarily—at the rapid growth of his finger-nails, and would like to know what is the usual rate of growth———Physicians say that the nails grow at the rate of about one thirty-second part of an inch a week, so that in eight weeks they will have grown a quarter of an inch. There is nothing to be alarmed at, however, in a higher rate of growth.

C. K.—The reduction of a penny per pound in the duty on a commodity like tea is a serious matter for the revenue. A few years ago, when the duty was reduced by twopence, it meant a loss of over a million sterling in the year, or about 1 per cent. of the total revenue.

K. L. P.—The reference you saw to the high prices of pieces of music was in *Pearson's Weekly*. Most of those you mention, however, you may obtain for the low sum of twopence halfpenny per copy from Mr. T. Holloway, of 78 New Oxford Street, London, who has arranged to supply them to readers of *S. S.* at this price. If you will send a postcard to the address given you will receive a complete list of songs included in this offer, and if you wish to obtain a large number of them, special terms are offered.

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9ft. by 9ft.	.....	7/6		12ft. by 15ft.	.....	15/9
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No. 528. Feb. 11, 1899.] [One Penny.

SHORT STORIES

A POOR COURTSHIP, BUT—

"Ah, me!" sighed Margie Harrison. "Out there is blue sky, and sun, and fresh air, and a little farther on is grass—and trees. It is spring everywhere except here."

"Out there" was the glimpse of light that came to her, far down the crowded shop—just the little light that crept in under the awnings, and over the heads of the shoppers, to the cashier in her box.

"I know how a canary feels, now!" she went on, to herself.

She was not idle as she soliloquised, for her hands were busy making change for the cash boys. Below her platform, shoppers pulled about the goods and harassed the assistants who, in turn, hectored the boys and girls. Above the conversation, the rustle and clatter, came sharp cries of "Ca-ash!"

Margie was a slender little girl, with pale cheeks that hardly ever saw the sun—so pale that they accentuated the brightness of her dark blue eyes and the brown hair that Nature had roughened becomingly.

For the rest, her mouth would have been kissable, had there been anyone to attend to the matter; and her round chin was softly dimpled.

But no one ever stopped to think that she was good to the eye—that is, except the dapper young shop-walker of that department, and him she had snubbed into a secret enmity—for she was only part of a machine, a whirling, noisy beehive, with never a drone inside its walls.

They were not people; they were employées, and they worked under a masterly rule that made the great business a success, but stole the individuality of the workers.

"I can't stand it another year," she said despairingly. "I wasn't made for darkness. It isn't the work, for I expect to work; it's the withering—heart and soul. I'll go to work in somebody's garden; I'll—I'll wheel a barrow—anything to be outdoors!"

She sighed again, and glanced contemptuously at the light bulb above her, that seemed to make the atmosphere more smothering as she continued her duties.

She knew little about sunshine. She lodged with her only brother, who lived so far from the Emporium that she could not walk, but must reach her work by means of the omnibus. Luncheon was served the employées in a basement room where lights burnt all day; evening, found her riding home to the top room, where she slept.

All her stray glances were directed down the tunnel-like aisle toward the light, so she did not see a young man who stood near by, looking about in a half-confused way, until she turned and caught his eye. His cheeks were tanned, his eyes blue, and he looked kind and honest, so she smiled. He stepped forward and spoke over the heads of the cash-boys.

"I want to get a black gown for my mother—something thin, with violets on it, to look like the country. Can you tell me where to go?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, "Go down the next shop to the right—the end counter. There are lawns and muslins there with violets that you can almost smell."

"Thank you, Miss," said he, partly turning. Then, facing her again: "That's about the only kind of flowers you who serve in shops get a chance to see, I expect."

"Yes, sir," she answered, smiling again, "and it isn't living to shut ourselves away from the Spring like this."

"I know it," he replied with rather shy sympathy. "I couldn't stand this myself. I'm from the country—keep a farm. Give me a pasture with cattle in it, and grass just covered with blue spider wort, pink sensitive roses, larkspur. It beats a city."

"Oh-h-h!" gasped Margie at the thought of so much sweetness. "Think of flowers free for every one to pick, and——"

"Ca-ash!" called an impatient boy, and just then the shop-walker discovered the young man at the desk and stepping up to him touched him on the shoulder:

"Against the rules, sir." Then, to Margie, "Miss Harrison, you should know better than this."

Margie coloured as she explained:

"This gentleman wants to see figured black lawns and——"

"When another customer asks such a question, refer him to me," answered the shopwalker.

With a look of friendly regret, and a protestation that he, himself, was to blame for the breach of rules, the young man suffered himself to be directed to the other end of the shop.

The next morning the spirit of unrest burnt again in the girl's heart, and again she repined. But a wonderful thing happened. The tanned young countryman made his way down the shop towards her desk bearing a beautiful burden which he pushed through the window without a word, but with a sympathetic, brotherly smile on his face, and then turned and left the building.

It was a basket of pansies embedded in damp moss—wonderful, velvety faces in purple, bronze and yellow, looking smilingly at her.

It was the happiest day of her life, a never-to-be-forgotten day. She could not long for the woods when a marvellous bit of the woods had come to her.

The next morning a cash boy brought a great bunch of spring violets.

"A fellow from the country give me a copper to bring you these," he explained.

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Again Margie was in transports, but—the stranger might have brought them himself. She missed his cheery smile.

An hour or so later, however, he strolled through the crowd and smiled from afar. As he was borne nearer, she smiled at him in return over the posies, and ventured, even under the jealous eye of her dragon shopwalker, to say:

"Oh, thank you so much!"

A smile in answer, as he passed on, and another perfect day wore away. At closing time that evening the same young man stood near the main entrance till long after the doors were closed, but the employées poured out of the basement entrance on the other side of the building, and he missed them, much as he would have liked to see one bright-eyed girl in shabby black, who sat in a 'bus holding a bunch of violets, her lips parted in a dreamy smile.

The next morning a bunch of fragrant, nodding lilacs was thrust through her window—the first of the blooms she had ever owned—and again she nodded ecstatic thanks to her unknown friend. That she might be doing wrong in accepting the favour did not occur to her, nor that the joy she felt night and day was not all in the flowers.

Then came a great handful of long-stemmed fleur-de-lis, in all the exquisite shades of purple, that brought to her, who had never seen them growing wild, a vision of pretty banks and rippling water, and again she nodded and smiled her thanks, under disapproving eyes.

The next morning her friend brought his offering in person, walking with determined step and with a decided expression on his face. This time he bore white tea roses—long-stemmed, heavy-headed, fragrance-burdened—and handed them across the desk. She blushed a rosy red, and before she could speak he said:

"I want to say a thing or two and it doesn't make any difference to me who objects," with a defiant glance at the glowering shopwalker.

"But—oh! sir, you have been so kind to me, but I can't talk—it's against the rules. I'll lose my place."

"Miss Harrison!" came the warning.

"Oh, please go!" implored Margie in a half-whisper. "I have twenty minutes for luncheon at one o'clock, and can see you at the back entrance for one moment, if you'll *only* go now."

On this promise the young man went away without a word, but, unfortunately, the shopwalker had heard her make the appointment, and wishing revenge for past slights, and resenting her apparent friendliness with another man, reported the affair in such terms that when luncheon time came an envelope was handed to the girl containing the amount of wages due to her and a notification that her services were no longer required by the firm.

In her distress she forgot all about her appointment with the man who had been the cause of her dismissal, so, as he stood waiting at the door, he was almost knocked over by a slender little girl with hat pulled down over suspiciously red eyes, and an altogether dejected appearance.

"Something has happened!" he exclaimed.

"The shopwalker reported me," was the answer, with an escape of tears, "and they have discharged me."

"No! Did they?" was his exclamation in lively tones, and with a most cheerful expression. "Come," he added, "let us walk down to a café I know, and let me talk to you a moment while you have your luncheon."

"But—I don't know you," demurred Margie.

"Nor do I you," he retorted, with a boyish laugh, "but I want to. Are you afraid to trust me?"

Margie looked in his face a moment, and then walked along beside him until the restaurant was reached. Her escort did not address her again until they were seated in a secluded corner and luncheon had been brought.

"I am Philip Douglass," he said briskly; "twenty-eight years old, unmarried, with three hundred acres of land—and one corner of my farm runs down into the river—a moist, shady little spot where almost every flower will grow if it is planted, and we have planted a good many. I live with the dearest, gentlest mother in the world, and I am worth enough money to do as I please. You are—" he paused

"Margery Harrison," put in the girl.

"Margery—Margery," he reiterated softly. "A sweet name. What else can you tell me that will make me know you better?"

"Twenty years old," began Margery demurely, "stubborn, impatient and unconventional. I lodge with my brother Fred and his wife. I've worked at York's for five years, and now," remembering her trouble, with a quick rush of tears, "they have sent me away without a moment's notice and I must start out to hunt for my daily bread. And here I am, telling all this to you, when I must say good-bye, and thank you, a thousand times, for the beautiful flowers—the first I have ever had given me."

Philip caught her hand as she started to rise. "Sit down a moment, Miss Harrison—Margery—till I tell you what I meant by those flowers. They meant that when I saw you perched up there in that poisoned air, like a poor, forgotten and neglected flower, with your pale cheeks and eyes like velvet pansies, I felt such a pity for you that I wanted to transplant you out into the green fields and under the blue sky where the birds sing all day. And in a day or two more I began to feel a pity for myself, that I was not sure of transplanting you, and that you might slip away from me altogether. You'll come with me, won't you, Margery?"

Margie's hand was still in his, screened from the rest of the room by the long table-cloth, and as she searched his face wonderingly her cheeks crimsoned.

"But—but—you don't know me. I'm penniless, and haven't anyone in the world but Fred. It's all so sudden—you might change your mind."

"Never!" he exclaimed emphatically. "And as for your being friendless and penniless, you'll be so much the more mine. But you must know more about me. I'm a queer sort of fellow—what my neighbours call a 'book farmer,' but I've shown them that my book farming pays. But I want you to be satisfied with me—the man."

"I am satisfied," murmured the girl. "You carry your recommendation in your honest face, and in your eyes that I thought that first day were the kindest eyes I ever saw. I—I am willing to be transplanted."

Phillip did not say a word at first, just sat and held Margie's hand tightly, while he looked long and happily into her sweet, blushing face. Then, with a deep indrawing of his breath, he spoke with a tremble in his voice.

"My Margery, my Margery. It is a poor courtship, but it will be a long honeymoon to make up for it. I will love you and care for you so tenderly, that you will never regret this hastiness. I knew, the moment I saw your face, that I could make you happy, and the next time I knew I wanted you to make me happy."

May Garbutt.

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THE LAWFUL HEIR.

By JULIAN FITZMORE.

PART II.

SUMMARY.

CONRAD WALKER, the only son of an English family of high reputation, married the daughter of a retired merchant. The anger of his parents knew no bounds, and Conrad was forbidden the house. Having his own estates in Canada he took his wife to that country, but after many years she died, leaving him with a son to look after. Thinking his son would like the trip, and being curious to see who had inherited his estates since his parents' deaths, Conrad Walker returned to England. He found his estates had been claimed by the Earl of Aldergate, a distant cousin. The Earl has a very beautiful and kind daughter—the Hon. Eva Porton—and by chance Conrad Walker's son meets her at a garden party and falls in love with her.

CHAPTER V.

A GOOD SAMARITAN.

'T was a few days after the garden party at Porton that Mr. William Walker set out from The Bull for a stroll round the district, after having spent the morning with his father in discussing various phases of their holiday.

"How long are you intending to stay yet at Wellcaster, dad?" had inquired the young man. "I thought we were only coming over to England for a week or two, with just a run down from London to see this place, and here we've been for some six weeks or so in Wellcaster alone, and we've yet got to go and see the house and town where you were born, and which you've often spoken of, near Durham."

The elder man's grave smile deepened, and his blue eyes rested lovingly on his son.

"Ah, my boy," said he, "I did not know you were in such a hurry to leave Wellcaster. I had thought you rather liked being here!"

"So I do, dad. I think it's a delightful old place, a splendid little country town; and Porton Lodge, you know—well, I never saw any house I think half so grand and baronial. How proud the family must be!"

"Including the Hon. Eva Porton, of course?" put in Mr. Walker.

"Yes, certainly, dad."

"I believe, William, you rather like that young lady?"

"Like! Ah, well, yes. But what's the good of liking what one can't get, dad? You've told me oft enough that it were better to be lowly born, and happy in love, than to be high-born and miserable. You've said how proud and exclusive the English aristocracy are, and how they resent all connections—from family ties or otherwise—with those they deem their inferiors; so if this is so, what is the use of my thinking of Miss Eva Porton, fairly well-to-do and respectable Canadians though we are?"

And the son's face suffused a rosy red. Yet it was as beautiful as it is unusual to see the confidence between son and father, even upon so delicate a topic. Probably the fact that there was no mother living to consult made the affection between these two all the dearer and the more communicative.

"William, do you love this girl?" asked the parent suddenly, after a slight pause.

The young man turned his frank blue eyes on his father, and met his gaze blushingly but fully.

"Yes, father, I do," said he. "And,"—he spoke slowly and deliberately,—"I would do anything for her! I love her with my whole heart and soul!"

"You have, of course, not spoken to her about such a thing?"

The few words said at the garden party did not seem to William to require recognition as being here referred to.

"No," said he "There is no use in so doing, to be refused," he went on, somewhat bitterly, yet with a laugh. "What could I offer her? And even if she loved me, what about the Earl and the Countess? No, dad, no. I may love, but it must be 'loved and lost,' I suppose."

"Ah, well, we'll talk of this later, William. Now I've some letters to write, and Briggs to see. You'll have a walk, I expect?"

"Yes," said the son.

And so it came to pass that on this day in question Mr. William Walker was strolling along the high road from Wellcaster to Porton, by the side of the park surrounding the Lodge. Unconsciously, as it seemed to him, he had taken this path, and yet he knew why he had done so, or at least, when he asked his heart it soon gave him the reason. It was because this way led to Porton Lodge, because there was just a chance of seeing Miss Eva Porton driving or walking somewhere in the neighbourhood on this fine afternoon.

He had almost reached the entrance to the park, when he heard loud voices in the shrubberies that surrounded it—voices that seemed from their tones to indicate anger and quarrelling amongst their owners. The latter were hidden from him by the stone wall bounding the park on the road side, which was just high enough to be above his head.

Without even a second thought, wondering simply what was taking place, William had at once climbed the wall, and there a curious sight met his gaze. The two contestants were Mr. Herbert Blair and a young country lad, doubtless from Wellcaster. The latter had, it appeared, been trespassing in the shrubbery, when he was caught by Mr. Blair, and having been ordered off, became insolent, owing to which the other was now trying to drag him out into the open park, a proceeding which the boy resisted as strongly as possible.

"I tell 'ee I worn't a-poachin' or a-bird-nestin'," said the lad sulkily; "And I won't 'ave 'ee a-draggin' me about either." With this he gave an extra tug that sent Mr. Blair sprawling against a holly bush, much to

that gentleman's discomfort. But he did not lose his hold of the boy, and when he had recovered himself, raised his whip and struck the urchin heavily, twice across the body, making him fairly yell with pain.

All this had been done so quickly and unexpectedly that William had had no chance or time of interfering, and the combatants were so much engaged that neither of them were aware of his presence.

When, however, he saw Mr. Herbert again raise his whip, and strike the boy on the bare legs, he called out loudly:

"Here, here, don't be a coward. That's enough anyway!"

So saying, he jumped down hurriedly into the shrubbery from the wall, but in his haste and righteous anger he did not observe a stone standing out near the bottom. His leg caught it with such effect as to cause that member to begin at once to swell and go black, whilst for himself, unable to stand from the pain, he sank down on the ground.

Herbert Blair, whose face had become white as death with passion and hatred at the interference of this "low fellow," and who had advanced a few steps towards confronting him also as a trespasser, now smiled maliciously, as he turned on his heel, saying:

"Just serves you right, sir, for your confounded impertinence! Now you may stay there till you feel disposed to get up and walk home with your friend here."

And, giving the boy another threat of what he'd get if he were caught trespassing again, the Countess's son disappeared.

The pain of the injured limb had been so severe that William Walker had fainted, just as Mr. Herbert had passed out of the shrubbery into the park. For some minutes he lay quite unconscious to what was around him, despite the Wellcaster youth's vigorous attempts to "wake him up"—well-meant, but ineffectual. The latter, however, was sensible enough to stay by him till he came round, on which happening he was asked by the young man to go and get assistance from the lodge-keeper if possible.

In a few minutes that functionary, whose house was, as was said before, not far away, came up, and by his aid Mr. Walker managed to get to the lodge, where the injured leg was bathed and well attended to by the keeper's wife, whilst the boy explained, as lucidly as he could, that "it wor all along o' that there Mister Blair, who'd a-been thrashing 'im, when this 'ere good gentleman interfered, and said as 'ow it wor an awful shame, and 'ad jumped over the wall and sprained his leg, as to which Mr. Blair said as 'ow it sarved him right, and wouldn't help 'im one bit."

It was arranged that Mr. Walker should sit still for an hour or two, whilst the boy was asked to call at The Bull on his way home, and tell them to send on the trap for Mr. William Walker.

The Hon. Eva Porton was driving her pony carriage into Wellcaster that afternoon about three, when, as she was passing the lodge, she bethought herself of a little favour she had promised to do Mrs. Scrubbs, the keeper's wife, some time ago, and thought that she would just look in about it. So, knocking at the door, after dismounting from the pony-carriage, she astonished Mrs. Scrubbs on walking in as usual, by a sudden confusion and blushing as she saw the young man on the couch with his leg bandaged.

"Ah, Mr. Walker," said Miss Eva, advancing towards him, "you here—and hurt? What is this? What does it all mean?"

William held out his hand in response, saying quietly:

"An accident as I was walking on the road, Miss Porton, thank you. Nothing serious. I only climbed the wall, and caught my leg in jumping down."

"So you're a prisoner, and can't get back to Wellcaster? Well, I'm driving there. Will you accompany us in the pony carriage?"

And, without waiting for his answer, Miss Porton called John, the groom, who came and assisted Mr. Walker in.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Scrubbs's voluble tongue had given the lady a full account of the affair, for Mr. Herbert Blair was no friend of hers.

Eva Porton felt her blood tingle at the inhuman conduct of her so-called half-brother.

"I must apologise for his behaviour, if one can apologise for such treatment, Mr. Walker," said she, as they drove townward.

"Oh, please don't, there is no need, Miss Porton," he returned.

"No need!" ejaculated the girl warmly. "He ought to be ashamed of himself." Then, with a sudden burst of pride and wrath: "Anyhow, I'm glad he is not a Porton, Mr. Walker."

What would she have said had she known the man who sat beside her *was* a Porton?

Mr William was deposited safely at The Bull, to the relief of his father's anxiety. The latter thanked the Hon. Eva very much, as did also the son, but she laughingly repudiated any thanks as she drove away, hoping he would soon be better, and saying her groom should call to inquire to-morrow.

She let the Earl know what she thought of it that night, too, and his Lordship mentally ejaculated that "the girl was indeed a Porton!"

Mr. Conrad Walker had meanwhile spent a busy day resolving whether it was his duty to go back to Canada with William, or ——

And he finally decided to consult Briggs about it, and take him into confidence.

CHAPTER VI.

A Double Consultation.

T was early next day that Mr. Conrad Walker carried out his determination of the previous evening, and paid a visit to Lawyer Briggs, as everybody in Wellcaster called the local scion of the law.

Mr. Briggs had been in practice at Wellcaster for some years, and as the practice before his time had belonged to his father, and previous to that, to his grandfather, it may be assumed that the worthy lawyer knew most of the secrets of the families in and around the district. The Briggs family had long been the solicitors for the Earls of Aldergate.

He was a clean-shaven, keen-eyed man was Lawyer Briggs. Mr. Conrad Walker had consulted him before on some business affairs in London and Canada, without at first revealing his identity, though he did so later on, and it was thus that the lawyer had been able to recommend the two tourists to the kind notice of Captain and Mrs. Jackson.

But early this morning as the Canadian gentleman was, Mr. Briggs had been honoured with an earlier client, the lady who has just been mentioned. She had, after her thoughts of a few days before, resolved to see what the solicitor thought of the affair, at the earliest

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opportunity, and with a woman's usual idea, thought she should either learn if he was aware of the identity she had already established in her own mind, or if not, she would have the pleasure of putting it before him, and seeing how he liked the surprise.

Like a woman, too, when she makes up her mind, Mrs. Jackson was not long in coming to the point. She entered the office just after ten o'clock, before Mr. Briggs had had time to go through his morning's correspondence, quite taking even the astute lawyer aback by her early visit and evidently important mission.

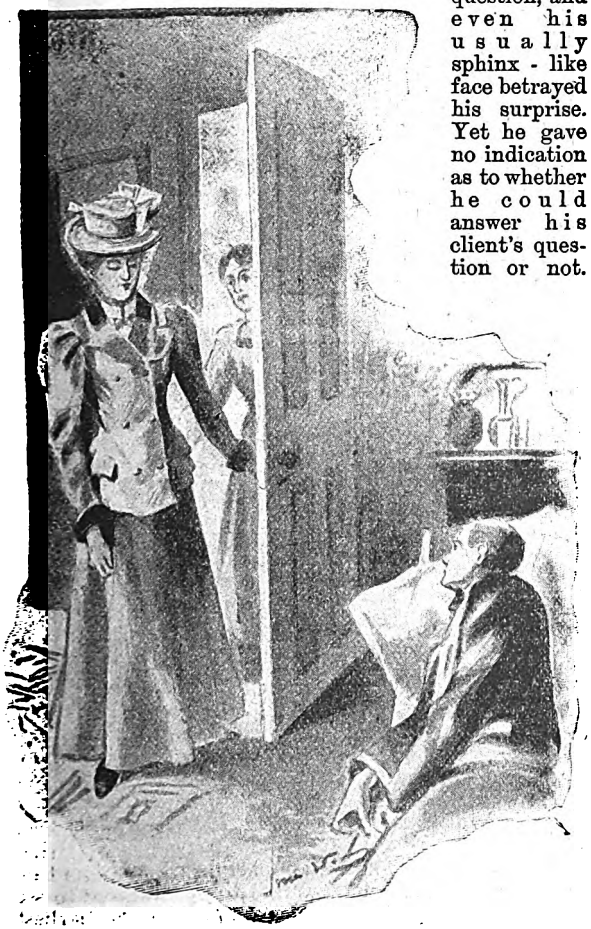
"You are early this morning, Mrs. Jackson," said the solicitor, shaking hands. "To what may I attribute the honour of your visit?"

"I want you to tell me something, Mr. Briggs," said the lady. "I have just been dying for the past day or two to ask you, but I've not been able to come till now, though I have taken the first opportunity. You'll promise to tell me, won't you?"

"Certainly, madam, if it is anything I can lawfully do," was the cautious reply.

"Well, these two tourists, Mr. Conrad Walker and his son, who are they?"

The lawyer was somewhat taken aback by the abruptness of the question, and even his usually sphinx-like face betrayed his surprise. Yet he gave no indication as to whether he could answer his client's question or not.



"Ah! Mr. Walker, you here?"

He simply looked at her, and then smilingly said, "Why, they are Mr. Conrad Walker, and his son, tourists from Canada, who are spending some weeks in England."

"You know them well? You've done some business for them?"

"I've had the honour of the latter, Mrs. Jackson. As to knowing them well—well, I've told you what I know."

"And you mean to say you don't know what they're doing in this district so long?" queried the lady, with a sharp glance.

"Oh, yes, they're staying at The Bull!" retorted he.

The lady laughed.

"How provoking you are, Mr. Briggs," said she. "You make me be plain and rude in my questions instead of telling me what I want to know."

"I've told you, madam."

"No, you've not. Now, look here, don't let's waste time further. I'm speaking in confidence. Do you know that Mr. Conrad Walker is Mr. William Porton, or rather is the Earl of Aldergate?"

If the lawyer had guessed such, or did know, he kept his face as inscrutable as ever.

"Whatever are you saying, Mrs. Jackson!" asked he.

"What I am sure is true, only I want you to confirm it. I found it out the other night after the party, but I've said nothing to anyone but you, and you need not fear my doing so."

"Well, if you are satisfied as to what you say, you scarcely need to ask me, who cannot even know that much. You see, Mrs. Jackson, we lawyers ——."

But the conversation was cut short by the entrance of a clerk, who said that Mr. Conrad Walker desired an interview, and the lawyer ordered him to be shown in. Mrs. Jackson, therefore, had to rise and say adieu, half satisfied only with the result of her visit, and yet wholly certain in her own mind. The new-comer bade her "Good morning" gaily as she met him at the door, and he promised to call on her before long.

"I suppose you have heard, Briggs," said he, on getting settled down into an easy armchair which the lawyer placed for him, "of this latest development of spleen and rudeness on the part of young Blair?"

"Why, yes, of course, it is all over the town. That young scamp of Mother Wellon's would see to that, you may rest assured, for he's praised up Mr. William through it all and run down Mr. Blair till all Wellcaster is eulogising the one and venting its spite on the other. Not but what he deserves it, too! The fact of the matter is, your Lordship——"

"There, drop that, Briggs, you know what we agreed. No 'Lordship' for me yet at any rate. Though, by the way, it's principally this I've come to have a talk with you about. At least something pertaining to it."

The lawyer sat and listened attentively.

"I have, as you know, Briggs, held back so far; should do all my life, I might say, if I could, from claiming my rights. You know all the story, and you may be sure that I'm not keen now on what I gave up even when my dear wife was alive. And when I came to England, I had firmly resolved that my son should know no more of who he is than he knows now, and that's—nothing!"

The lawyer betrayed his surprise at this by a start.

"But things have changed rather, and some unexpected developments have occurred. You see, I had no

idea that the present possessor had no son, nor that he had a daughter such as the Honourable Eva Porton. And, Briggs, there's another and more startling fact. I find from private conversation with my son that he is in love with this young lady, and from more things than one I fancy she reciprocates his love. He is more severely hit than I thought. But he withholds telling her of his love because he fears refusal, probably from her—still more from her father—owing to, as he thinks, his inferior position. Now, you see, I know what William is; I know that he never loves lightly, and I know how this love has gone into his very life, and now, if we returned to Canada, he would never be the same again. And so, Briggs, I have been wavering in my mind as to not making any revelation, and I have wondered if it would be better to disclose to him who he is, so that he might not feel at all inferior in rank to the lady whom he wishes to make his wife. Of course it could not be made public till after the present Earl's death; as far as I see, there is no reason why it should. And I don't think the present Earl will be a long liver; he has never looked like one to me."

"His heart is affected, your Lordship," said the lawyer.

"There you are again, Briggs! Well, I myself am not likely to survive many years. So I wanted your opinion of the matter as to the wisdom of telling my son."

The lawyer rubbed his hands gleefully, whilst a smile of satisfaction crossed his face.

"I'm glad you've half-decided to do it at last, your Lordship!—Mr. Walker, then!"—added he parenthetically, as the other raised a warning finger. "It's only what is right and fair, and it will, I think, just about consummate the happiness of Mr. William and Miss Eva. How strange, when you come to think of it that it is *he* who is the titled one, the wealthy one, and she who is the——."

"There, that will do, Briggs! Miss Eva will never lose her title, I must see to that, if she accepts my boy. But he shall know nothing of it till I think it is the desirable time to tell. She shall love him for himself and his own good qualities alone. It would be advisable, however, that you should have all documents and papers quite in order and ready to prove my claims, &c., if at any time that should be necessary. So please see to that at once."

The solicitor promised to do so forthwith, and with many protestations of pleasure at the turn of events, accompanied his client to the door.

Meanwhile at Porton Lodge the Earl had expressed himself strongly to the Countess on the subject of Mr. Herbert's escapade, the rumours of which had reached even his ears.

"The fact is, my Lady," said he, "your son is getting himself into disrepute all over the country."

"There, there you go, my Lord," replied the Countess, "always grumbling at Herbert. But he will not have to stand the insults of those tourist people much longer. It is not the first time they have made themselves obnoxious. And I think you might have rather a word of praise for Herbert's looking after your rights by keeping trespassers and intruders off the land, rather than be constantly blaming him."

"It is his habit of disregarding what people will think that I oppose," said the Earl.

"Well, really, I'm sure I get tired of one thing or another. There's him on one side, and Eva on the other. What about the scandal of her driving that forward young Walker home in the pony carriage? Do you approve of that? Because if you do, I don't and I've told her so."

"Certainly not," said the Earl.

"Ah, I thought you surely wouldn't! You know, Porton, the fact is, it is time Eva began to settle down. She's getting too independent, has too much freedom here. Herbert has, as you know, for some time loved her, but really, since this last month or so, she's been that awkward that he's said nothing to her beyond what he was obliged."

The Earl's brow darkened. He evidently was not struck with the idea. "Eva must be free to choose for herself, Laura," he said, "If I do not approve of her choice, be sure I shall let her know it in no half-measured way."

And with this her Ladyship had to remain content.

CHAPTER VII.

A Repetition of the Old, Old Story.

T was a very beautiful day in the first week of September—one of September's loveliest days. The fields were all tinged with the decaying hand of autumn; the trees were all turning their foliage into various shades of yellow, whilst the bramble trailed its long, straggly tendrils over the other denizens of the hedgerows, and showed here and there a cluster of large, juicy blackberries hanging from a fruitful bough.

Yet the warm September sunlight, so very mellow in its influence, fell upon all these dwellers of the fields and woods, and made them look rich with its burnishing, and soothing to the eye and mind, just as is the reflected glory of the sunset after a hot summer's day.

The Hon. Eva Porton had taken her book, intending to walk through the park and to sit down to read quietly by the stream that meandered there. She walked along slowly, singularly uninterested in all the beautiful scenes of Nature around her, for Eva was one of those who generally are particularly attracted to the wonders that surround them in field or lane. But to-day she strolled lazily on, nor, when she reached the stream, did she sit down by it, as she had previously intended. She did not even attempt to read. Instead of that she turned off out of the park into a footpath that ran alongside the hedge, separating the fields from the road, into Wellcaster.

The grave thoughtfulness of her face showed that the Hon. Miss Porton was pre-occupied with thoughts, which, however, if judged by the way in which her countenance occasionally lit up, were not on the whole very sad ones. Now and then she stopped to gather some particularly striking plant or flower, though in her meditations she often, soon afterwards, pulled them in pieces, almost without knowing what she was doing. Sometimes she whispered, so to speak, a word or two to herself, and raised her head with a proud and happy look; once or twice she even laughed to herself, a low, sweet laugh of contentment.

"And why am I coming along here; why going towards Wellcaster?" she asked herself for about the tenth time.

Then she smiled again, and her heart answered for her, though she did not hesitate to put the answer into whispered words, whilst a deep crimson overspread her lovely face.

"It is because he once told me how he liked this path,

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and that he often came along it! Eva, Eva! Whatever are you coming to?"

But her heart only laughed the more, and she went happily on her way. Some yards further on a lovely spray of white convolvulus caught her eye. It was high up on the hedge, trailing over a privet bush, and falling down in a cluster of flowers on the other side towards the road. She tried more than once to reach it, but, though she could just touch it with her fingers, she could not get hold of it securely enough to break it off where she wanted.

Suddenly, she became aware that someone had come up on the other side of the hedge—come up unheard, from the fact of his feet falling so lightly on the soft turf by the roadside, and unseen, from the thickness of the privet hedge between them.

At the same time, she saw a hand break off the convolvulus bunch of flowers just where she wanted it doing, and immediately afterwards the form of a young man appeared above the hedge, he having climbed up the bank to hand over his prize to the desirer.

The mutual recognition surprised both, and brought a flood of rose colour to each of their cheeks.

"May I have the honour of giving you the convolvulus, Miss Porton?" asked Mr. William Walker, for he it was. "I saw the branch swinging from side to side, and someone trying to grasp it, so I came from the other side of the road to—well, assist, I suppose, though I had no idea that it was you, Miss Porton. I am so glad to have come up just in time to be of service to you!"

"Oh, Mr. Walker, really it was too kind of you altogether to trouble about so trifling a thing. I was just struck with the pretty bunch of flowers as I was walking along the path here, and reached out to get it, but it was rather beyond my reach."

"Are you going towards Wellcaster, Miss Porton?"

"Yes, Mr. Walker."

She said it half unthinkingly, for she had no fixed idea now as to which way she intended going, as she stood toying with her dainty parasol, and with her frank dark eyes glancing occasionally at his manly face.

"I am going there myself, Miss Porton," said he, perhaps a trifle eagerly. "May I have the pleasure of accompanying you?"

"If you care to do so," said she shyly.

"Care!" ejaculated the young man, as he came through a wide gap in the hedge a little way lower down. "Care! Don't you know by now, Miss Porton, that nothing is too much trouble for me to do for you, that you talk of 'caring'?"

They walked along side by side; he, eager yet calm in his love, with the true Canadian's ideas of equality and freedom, almost forgetting that the girl by his side was an Earl's daughter, and he, a Canadian farmer; she, shy, blushing, and yet so happy, though now and then smiling at what Society in London would think of her, if it saw her, or what the Countess would say if she caught a glimpse of the scene. She felt it incumbent on her to say something at last.

"I trust, Mr. Walker, that your leg is now quite better."

"Yes, thank you. It *was* kind of you to drive me to Wellcaster that day—it was almost worth straining one's muscles to be so humoured."

"There, don't joke, Mr. Walker."

"I'm not joking, Miss Porton," said he, with a grave look.

"Well, then, don't flatter," said she coyly.

"I'm not flattering you," returned he earnestly. Then after a long try to get a good look at her downcast eyes, he murmured, "You know I mean what I say, Miss Porton! You know what I think; what I wish; what I so eagerly long for!"

Her face was more hidden than ever under that picture-hat, whilst of the brown eyes he could scarcely

She tried more than once to reach it.

get a glimpse. Her heart was beating violently, and she trembled.

"Whatever do you mean, Mr. Walker?" asked she, recovering some words after a determined effort.

He took her small, daintily-gloved hand in his, and she did not withdraw it!

This encouragement enabled him to proceed, but the story came out now in a regular burst. He had forgotten now who she was; everything but that he loved her.

"Oh, Miss Porton, you know what I mean! You know that I love you! Yes, you *must* hear me, though I'm unworthy of you; I love you with all my heart and soul. Perhaps I ought not to tell you so—you, who are so far above me—but I cannot help it. I *must* tell you how I've loved you from the first, and shall love you till I die! There! And," after a pause, in which she had turned away her head, though the tears—tears of joy—had gathered in her eyes, "you, Miss Porton? I am not altogether wrong, am I? Surely you love me a little? You do, don't you?"

This time he bent and gazed right into those dark eyes. That gaze seemed to give their owner courage, for she lifted up her head proudly, and said, in a very low whisper, "Yes."

He clasped her to his breast, broad daylight as it was.

"Eva, my Eva! My own darling Eva!"

He seemed as if he could never tire of saying the name.

"There, Master William," said she at last, arranging her hat after at least a dozen kisses, "there, are you satisfied?"

"Not quite, my darling," laughed he.

Then they walked on, but oh! how bright and sunny the whole world was! And they were so happy, so deliciously happy!

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It was she who first broke the silence of that hand-in-hand walk towards Wellcaster.

"William," shyly she breathed his name, "whatever will papa say? And the Countess! Good gracious, she *will* go on!"

The young man's reply was laconic and Canadian.

"Let her!" he said. "As to the Earl, you leave that to my father and me. Father somehow always manages to get people round who are awkward, and no doubt he'll help us."

"I must return to Porton Lodge now, dear," she said. "I am not going to Wellcaster. I am too happy."

"As you please, my darling," said he, turning with her. "It will give us all the more opportunity of telling our love to each other."

But their hearts were too full for many words. Her face was radiant with love and smiles, and Mr. William Walker just looked as happy as could be. They talked of the future with hearts beating high with hope, and the gentleman promised to call upon the Earl on the following day.

"I never dreamt, Eva, that I should win the love of an Earl's daughter," said William, as they stood, before parting, at the side gate to the park. "But I'll try to to make you as happy as any loving husband ever could," said he.

"And I'll try to be as good a wife as any husband ever had," said she, her great brown eyes resting on him lovingly.

Then there was a renewal of the "dozen kisses" ere they parted, two hearts as full of love and happiness as Heaven's sunshine ever rested on.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Countess of Aldergate Receives a Shock

IT may be safely said that the Countess of Aldergate had never received such a shock in her life as when, being called into the library the following morning, she was acquainted by the Earl with the news which he had just learnt from the lips of his daughter herself, which was meagre enough in all conscience, seeing that it was to the effect that Mr. William Walker would call upon his Lordship about eleven that morning, and formally propose for the hand of the charming Hon. Eva!

The Earl himself had gone red in the face, and stared at his daughter as if she were not in her right mind, when, with some natural hesitation and shyness, she had broached the subject, thinking it would better prepare the way for her lover. Then he had become angry, so far as he ever was angry with her, and said,

"Surely, Eva, you have not considered what you really are doing by this? You, whom I had intended for some nobler marriage than that with a wandering Canadian!"

"There is no nobler marriage than that which springs from true love, papa," the girl had nobly answered. "I am high-born enough as it is, and am wealthy enough, too. So that all I see is necessary is for me to be happy and loved, and I am sure that is what I shall be with Mr. Walker."

She had hesitated at the name, but in the end surrendered "William," as being perhaps too familiar, as yet, anyhow.

"Of course, Eva, I want you to be loved and happy, and I would not wish to force on you a disagreeable marriage, but you must allow me to say, before this has gone too far, that the other ideal alliances I and the Countess have had in view for you would be much more preferable."

"I don't think so, papa," said the girl, "Mr. Walker, like his father, is a thorough gentleman, and that is more than can be said for all my suitors—titled or untitled. And papa," she added coaxingly, going up and putting her arms round his neck in such a sweet way as half to disarm his perhaps justifiable resistance, "papa, you know, I love him, and he loves me, and I should be so unhappy if you refuse your consent. You can't tell how miserable I should be!"

"Well, well, this is an affair!" said he, "But naturally it is our duty to consult your mother. We must ask her to come here."

He rang the bell, and bade the footman request the Countess's attendance.

She came. Eva had expected a scene when her stepmother learnt the state of the case, but even Eva's expectations fell short of what happened.

The Countess held up her hands in righteous horror.

"Ernest!" she said, "you are surely not going, for one moment, to listen to any such absurdity. If Eva has no more sense than to go and make a laughing stock of herself, and a disgrace of us, by marrying a low-born adventurer from the Far West, instead of a real English gentleman, there is no need *we* should add to the folly by giving our countenance to it. Those people have been far too presuming for my fancy all along. Herbert did right in trying to make that impudent young man keep his proper place."

"A coward!" whispered the roused girl. "A despicable coward!"

"Eva! You forget of whom you are speaking!" said the Countess indignantly. "You are speaking of *my* son!"

"I can't help it," said the other, with her brown eyes blazing. "You make me say it."

"Ernest," said his wife, "you had better ask Eva to leave the room if we are to talk of this."

The father looked at the daughter, who, without further noticing her stepmother, remarked,

"I will go, papa. But you must not forget what I said."

She went, and retiring to her own room, burst into tears. Yet she was happy in her heart, for she knew that no Countess or anyone else could take away the love she felt and the love she had won.

For a long time her Ladyship talked with the Earl, and as she talked her influence began to make itself felt, so that Eva's chances of success gradually declined, and the Earl had practically settled not to assent to this proposal, when the footman announced that Mr. Briggs wished to see his Lordship on a matter of importance.

"Show him in," said the Earl.

Then putting out his hand, as the lawyer entered, and the Countess rose to retire, he greeted him with:

"Good morning, Briggs. You're early to-day. Anything important?"

"Very important, I think, your Lordship, or I should not have troubled you. Ah, your Ladyship,"—as the Countess was leaving the room—"it might, perhaps, be well if you could give us your presence and advice for a minute or two. Your Lordship doesn't mind my asking, I hope?"

"Certainly not! But what has my wife to do with our business, my dear sir? She knows nothing of my affairs, you know."

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"Her Ladyship may be useful, however, in this case," said the lawyer.

So the Countess returned and sat down, whilst both she and her husband waited eagerly to know the cause of Mr. Briggs' strange proposal.

"Your Lordship may well be surprised at my early visit this morning," began the lawyer, resting his arms on the table, where he had placed his packet of documents in due order, "but I assure you it is of the utmost importance, or I would not have troubled her Ladyship and yourself. You will pardon my speaking plainly, but I must do so in order to explain the position. Your Lordship will, I believe, this morning have an interview with that young tourist now staying at The Bull—Mr. William Walker—on a matter of importance. Probably, too, his father may call upon you."

"You are mistaken, Briggs," interrupted the Earl. "I know to what you allude, and as to which it would seem they have thought it necessary to consult you, but it is useless. I have quite resolved that I shall not interview Mr. William Walker, a mere boy, on any such subject; it is simply absurd." Here he was fortified by the gracious smile and nod of the Countess, in her superior scorn of such persons. "As to his father coming! Why, that is even more absurd. I never heard of a youth whose proposal had to be seconded by the presence of his father! 'Pon my word, if it didn't bring Eva in, it would be as good as a comic opera."

And the Earl and Countess laughed boisterously.

But the lawyer looked grave.

"Your Lordship must pardon me," said he, "if I look upon this as a more serious affair than you suppose. You will act, to my mind, somewhat incautiously if you refuse to see the gentleman in question, even on a less important matter than this."

"And pray, why should I have to receive any person at Porton Lodge unless I choose, Mr. Briggs?" asked the Earl. "Cannot I do as I like in my own house?"

The lawyer coughed ominously and hemmed once or twice ere he spoke.

"That is just it, your Lordship," said he slowly. "You see—pardon my putting it so abruptly—it is not your own house—since Mr. Conrad Walker this Canadian tourist, is the long-lost Mr. William Porton, Earl of Aldergate!"

The solicitor had watched closely to see the effect of his words. And what an effect it was! The Countess laughed hysterically, declaring that it was all absurd; an impossible story; a lie, in fact! And she ended by going into hysterics pure and simple. The Earl—so we may still call him—became ashy white and looked at the man opposite him with dazed glance and open mouth. A great blow had fallen on him, and instinctively he knew the truth.

"Briggs, is this true?" he whispered, when he could speak. "Are you sure, have you positive proofs that this man—eh—this gentleman, is my long-lost cousin, and the real owner of—of—you know?"

"There's no doubt whatever about it, my Lord," said Briggs. "I have all the documents here, marriage certificates, birth certificates, and everything required to prove the claim. In fact the court would decide in ten minutes in his favour. It's somewhat strange now one can trace the family resemblance in his face that none of us ever noticed it—none except one lady."

"Ah," said the Earl slowly, "that was Eva, was it?"

"No, sir. It was Mrs. Jackson, of Netherthorpe. She recognised it, and spoke to me of it, but I tried to put her off."

"Then Eva doesn't know Mr. William Walker—Porton, rather—is her cousin, and heir to these titles and estates?"

"Not at all; nor does he himself!"

"What!" exclaimed the Earl. "Is he ignorant of his identity?"

"Perfectly," said the lawyer.

Then, after a pause, "Well, what do you advise or propose, Briggs?"

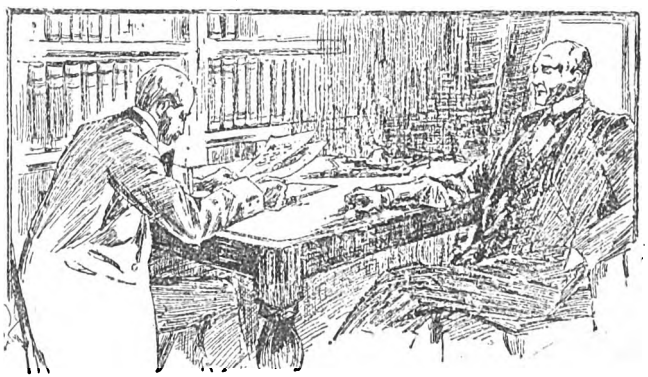
"Mr. Walker—yes I'll call him so—has requested me to put before you the following offer. You shall sanction the engagement and marriage of his son with Miss Eva—for they really love each other, I understand, deeply—allowing them, when they have the desire, to reside at Porton Lodge with you, though they'll no doubt mostly live in London. If you agree to this Mr. Walker, who is not ambitious to take up the title, is willing to leave the whole estate in your possession for life, as at present, excepting a third of the income which is to go to Mr. William and his bride. You would still retain all titles and power during your life; at your death he, if alive, would declare his title; and, if dead, Mr. William would of course be the new Earl. I must say I think it an extremely generous proposition, nay, a magnanimous one. There is only one other stipulation, which you will see is best for all—the two Blairs are to live elsewhere than at the Lodge here."

It need not be told how delighted Mr. William Porton—we can call him that just for once—was, on receiving an unexpected welcome and approval from the Earl, on his formal proposal for Eva's hand, nor how that young lady was also extremely astonished at the change in her father's demeanour.

But it was none the less welcome, and at last two loving hearts were happy.

They were soon afterwards married; but not till the Earl died suddenly, some nine months later, did they learn the truth; and when Mr. Conrad Walker became the new Earl in reality, then no one was more surprised than the two young people at finding that after all, Porton was their true name and dignity!

Happy indeed in love was their married life, and happy they made everybody around them, both as the heirs, and afterwards, when, a few years later, they in turn came into the titles and estates as Earl and Countess of Aldergate.



He looked at the documents.

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A Tale of Two Daggers.

My friend Bert Paget has a nice place on the heights of Pasadena. When I am in the vicinity, I make it convenient to drop in on him, sometimes, for weeks at a time; and when I am not in the vicinity I make it convenient to have business there.

Bert and I understand each other, and Bert's wife happens to be my youngest sister, and a great favourite of mine, which may, in some measure, account for the mutual understanding existing between her husband and me. Bert is passionately fond of his wife, in which I don't blame him.

One evening Bert and I were sitting in his study enjoying our after-dinner cigars. I had just returned from Jamaica. The lamp cast a soft, orange radiance over the room, dimly outlining the odds and ends that Bert had picked up in various quarters of the globe during his ante-marriage wanderings, from a Damascus blade here to a boomerang there; a Sioux war bonnet in one corner, and a group of South Sea war clubs in another. The window before which we sat in the soft glow of the twilight, overlooked a balcony and the surrounding hills dotted with lights, while the brilliant stars twinkled in the sky, making a picture of fairylike beauty. Over the mantel-piece were a Zulu shield and a half dozen assegais, while beneath these latter were two crossed daggers.

I had not, to my remembrance, seen them before, and after glancing at them for a moment, rose from my chair and stepped closer to examine them. They were a pair, and each bore along the blade a number of characters of some written language.

The hilts were of a metal resembling gold, in which were set a great number of jewels that sparkled in the lamplight.

After a moment's inspection, I turned towards Bert with the intention of asking him their history; when, as I did so, I saw him looking at me with a frown, something unusual with Bert.

"What's the matter?" I asked in surprise.

"Nothing, only I suppose you'll ask me to tell you about those things next, and I've got tired of them," he answered in an irritable tone, turning towards the window.

"You had better wait till you're asked, before you jump into a fellow like that," I retorted, with some asperity.

"Excuse it, Rob," he replied; "I meant nothing, but there's an odd tale there," nodding towards the weapons, "and, oh, pshaw!" he concluded, as if the subject were unworthy of further discussion.

"If you have no objection, I'd like to hear it," I said, keen for a tale of mystery.

"I knew you would," he replied, moodily.

"Not if it annoys you," I responded quickly, "perhaps Nellie——"

"Nellie is the only one who knows, and she is bound to secrecy," he interrupted.

"Then why not tell me yourself?" I asked, for I fancied that he was in the mood, and therefore, pushed my advantage.

"You wouldn't believe me," he answered briefly and sulking.

"Try me," I said, insinuatingly, blowing out a cloud of fragrant smoke.

Without a word, he rose from his chair and going to a cabinet, brought out a small decanter and glasses. Setting them on the table, he drew his chair near, filled the glasses, threw his head back so as to keep his eyes on the daggers, and began.

"I never believed in spiritualism, occultism, or any other heathenism, Rob; and I don't say that I've changed my mind or my views regarding them one and all, but something strange has twice happened to me, and I'd

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like to have some one to explain it—if they can. It was about the time you went to Jamaica that the first of these two things happened; let's see, yes, it was three years ago, that makes me right.

"I was sitting here in this same room at just about this time in the evening. Nellie was over at Grattley's, and I had promised to call for her at eleven. I sat in this chair and looked out of the window at the lights and stars, and after a while noticed that the evening star seemed particularly bright, looking for all the world like an electric light hung above the hills.

"I began to conjure up all sorts of ideas regarding it, wondering if it was inhabited, and if it was, what the people were like.

"Of course you have heard the theory that a man can hypnotise himself sometimes by looking at an object long and steadily, especially if the object be placed or held in such a position that it is a strain to keep it in sight. Well, I had fallen back in the chair and grown drowsy, but my mind still persisted in dwelling on the planet, and my speculations in no wise abated with the desire for sleep, but my thoughts grew confused, and presently I must have fallen asleep.

"Yet it seemed to me that it was a gradual transition from one state of life to another; I seemed to drift from the material things of this life into the spiritual ones of another. That is the only way I can explain it to you, for I really did not lose consciousness, but simply changed my point of observation, and began to look on new and strange scenes.

"I seemed to be walking leisurely along a handsome street in a strange city; the myriad lights sparkled and glittered along either side, and down the middle extended a broad tree-shaded footpath. Public places of entertainment and refreshment lined the sides, in front of which sat hundreds of people laughing, talking and drinking. I recall being impressed with the resemblance of the street to one of the avenues of Paris.

"The dress of the people banished the thought as it came. Their garb was a tunic and hose, belt and sandals for the men, while the women were arrayed in a style closely resembling the classic drapery of ancient Greece, and were bejewelled in dazzling splendour.

"Such a prodigal display of wealth no Arabian Nights' entertainer ever dared dream of; diamonds and rubies; sapphires and emeralds were everywhere in reckless profusion; even the goblet from which I quaffed a delicious drink when I sank on to a divan just without the portals of an elaborate place full of the sounds of exquisite singing, was thickly encrusted with them. I felt no surprise at my surroundings. It all seemed familiar to me, yet I could not identify it.

"No one paid any attention to me as I sat there enjoying myself.

"I was suddenly aroused from my reverie by a commotion near at hand, and turning my head quickly, observed with a shock that a desperate encounter was taking place behind me.

"A young man was standing with his back against the wall, a dagger uplifted in his hand, while before him were three adversaries, each trying to distract his attention in order that the others might finish him.

"A great crowd surrounded them, but no one offered him aid. I saw at a glance that it was but a question of seconds ere his one blow would be drawn, and the *coup de grâce* given.

"My blood boiled in that instant at the unfairness of the fight, and I sprang to my feet. With one bound, I had thrown myself at the nearest man and caught him by the legs, and as we came to the earth in a heap, myself underneath, I heard the thud of a dagger as it was buried in his back.

"In an instant I was on my feet, but not a fraction of a second too soon to evade a desperate blow aimed at me by one of the survivors. As I dropped and he swung past me, the young man, with a movement like a flash, struck his dagger to the hilt between his shoulders, and as he fell I drew it out quickly and faced the one remaining foeman.

"He made no effort to escape, but faced us both with astounding bravery. At this exhibition of cool nerve I took a step backward, leaving him with the man I had been championing.

"The encounter was brief, and the last of the three fell dead on the marble floor.

"From the time I sprang from my chair to the end could not have exceeded two minutes, and at its conclusion, the victor, his face wreathed in smiles, came to me and took my hand in silent gratitude. He then placed his arm in mine and we peacefully left the place.

"Not a soul interfered; not one but gave a cheer as we passed, and yet not one had offered my companion assistance against his apparently overwhelming odds.

"My new-found friend thanked me for my timely aid, and chatted amiably with me in a tongue that I had never heard before in my life, and yet I understood perfectly!

"Now mark; the place was strange, yet familiar; the language I had never heard before in my life, and yet I understood its every syllable, and talked with him in it as if it were my native tongue.

"Mechanically I thrust the dagger I carried through the waistband of my trousers, giving it no further thought. After a short stroll we came to a splendid house within a spacious garden, and entered. In a room off the hall, we disposed ourselves on couches, while numerous handsome girls served wine and cigarettes, somewhat after the Turkish style.

"As my friend reclined upon his couch smoking, and while the strains of beautiful music floated in on the redolent air, he took occasion to renew his thanks, and to add that if at any time or place I needed him and earnestly called him by his name, which was 'Tolia,' he would be instantly at my side.

"Under the combined influence of the wine, the smoke, the heavy fragrance of the atmosphere, and the dreamy music, a drowsiness overcame me, and I fell into a deep and dreamless slumber, which was only broken by a mellow chime, and upon opening my eyes, still having in mind my experience, my astonishment may be imagined when I found myself sitting in my chair in this room, awakened by yonder clock striking eleven.

"Recollecting my appointment to call for Nellie, I rubbed my eyes, jumped up, and was off in a moment, the realism of my dream clinging to me as I went. This I was notable to banish, and I explained my abstraction to Nellie by telling her that I had fallen asleep. When we reached home and I was preparing to retire, still thinking of the vivid dream, something fell from my clothes to the floor. It was shadowy in that part of the room, and I brought the lamp.

"Before me, on the floor lay the dagger of my dream!

"It were useless to try and tell you of the emotions engendered by the sight of the actual presence of this object of my fancied dream, a thing that I could no longer believe merely a dream. I slept little that

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night, nor for months could I forget it long enough to do any deep work. It never left me for more than an hour at a time.

"Nellie is a sensible girl, and after a while I told her of the circumstances under which I came into possession of the weapon."

"Don't you suppose you could account for it by an attempt at burglary?" I asked, excitedly.

"Would a burglar deliberately come and stick a valuable weapon in my waistband?" he queried disdainfully.

"That's true," I replied, thoughtfully, not a little wrought up over the uncanny tale.

"But you have heard only half the story; there's a sequel," he said; "and when I have finished I think you will be more puzzled than ever, but you wanted to hear it, and I don't do things by halves, besides, I'm getting interested myself."

"A sequel!" I cried. "Oh, do go on with it."

He smiled as he refilled his empty glass, then, having moistened his rather husky throat and lighting a fresh cigar, continued:

"That happened three years ago. I had not forgotten it by a good deal, and many an hour have Nellie and I spent in trying to understand it, but whatever theories we evolved were as quickly dissipated by some new idea. Of course where all was mere guesswork, and nothing could be proved these discussions were endless in their possibilities of scope.

"Last autumn we were returning from a trip through Canada with Bennett's family. I left Nellie to come on alone with them, while I joined a party of friends from different points for a three weeks' hunt.

"There were about twenty of us in the party, and we made as pretty a camp as you ever laid your eyes on, about seventy miles south of the railway.

"There was no lack of game, and we got a couple of bears, after we had been on the ground a week. We had a glorious time and for those three weeks I forgot all about that dagger.

"But the end came and we were to break camp on the morrow. I had been off on a long jaunt after a cinnamon with two cubs that I had spied early in the day, but, losing the trail, I was making my way back to the camp along the edge of a deep gorge with the creek a good five hundred feet below me, when I heard a stone fall into the cañon, and stopping quickly looked for the cause.

"Directly in front of me, about thirty yards away, were two men, the worst looking cut-throats I had ever had the misfortune to see in all my life, and as I made this mental observation, I found myself looking straight along the barrel of a Winchester in the hands of the one in advance.

"'Throw up your hands!' he said in tones of calm desperation.

"Now, Bob, I am no coward, but I know what the order means when the one who gives it has good backing, and I didn't waste a second, I assure you. There is always time enough to learn the why and wherefore later; that is if you don't stop too long to try and reason it out before hand. As I stood there with my hands over my head, the smaller of the two came quickly towards me under cover of his partner's rifle, pulling a cord out of his pocket as he advanced.

"Close inspection intensified the brutish face, and I was not the happiest man in the world as he proceeded to pull my arms down and tie them.

"A cornered man can think pretty quick, and he is apt to take desperate chances. I asked myself why two men should want to tie one simply to rob him, and I answered the question like lightning.

"'Dead men tell no tales!'

"They meant to kill me as a finishing job.

"He had one arm down as I thought this, and when he reached for the other, I reasoned that if I suddenly whirled and knocked him down, his partner would riddle me before I could turn. Well, I did whirl, but I had him in a bear-like hug between me and the other before the latter could wink an eye.

"Then came a pretty struggle for my rifle, while the other fellow covered the thirty yards between us, yelling to throw me over the cliff. That was easy enough to say but I was the better man, and would have sent his partner there in a jiffy if it had not been for the fact that the act would have been my death-knell.

"It doesn't take a man long to run thirty yards, and I had not succeeded in getting that rifle when he reached us and aimed a blow at my head with the evident intention of knocking that useful member clear across the gulch. But I slid aside and let my friend have it.

"The blow was a good one, and I held a dead man in my arms. In an instant the big one lowered his rifle, and in another I had dropped my man and had the barrel in my hands. But here I found my master. He was a giant, and he threw me round like a baby.

"We fought for that rifle like wild beasts for flesh, and we were perilously near the edge of the cañon. I was growing weak, while my opponent's strength seemed to increase with his rage, and he was forcing me toward the edge of the precipice!

"I tried to regain my lost ground, but I might have as well fought against a grizzly. I felt that it would be all over in a few seconds, but still I fought on.

"At that moment, when hope had forsaken me, and my ebbing courage almost fled, the thought of the friend of my dream came into my confused ideas, and I quietly, without definite notion of what I was doing, called:

"'Tolia—Tolia! come to me now!'

"The words had scarcely left my lips when there suddenly appeared, solidified from the thin air of the mountains, a figure in white; a keen-bladed dagger flashed in the air and then sunk to the hilt between the shoulders of my gigantic adversary!

"As he fell, I staggered towards my preserver, he caught my hand, and bowing his head over it in silence, touched it with his lips. The strain had been too much for me and I fell in a half swoon, I had not wholly fainted, but lay there to recover from my exhaustion.

"After ten minutes I was all right once more, and raising my head, looked about me. On one side lay the man with the crushed skull; nearer at hand, the brute who had nearly finished me, the dagger projecting from his back. Not another thing was in sight. My friend had vanished as he came.

"I withdrew the dagger and made my way to camp. The next day we came home. I did not mention my adventure to my friends. When I saw Nellie, I told her the whole story. You now know as much about it as either of us. If you can, I should like to have you explain it; neither of us can. There are the two daggers above your head."

CLAUDE MATHERSON.

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The Bride of Faliero.

THE palace of the Doge of Venice was flaming with lights and brilliant with colour, ablaze with torches and lamps, and gay with the sounds of festival music, and with the gorgeousness of magnificent costumes, flashing jewels, velvet masks, and lovely flowers, and merry with the company of gallant cavaliers and beautiful women intoxicated with the whirl of the dance.

Marino Faliero, the Doge of Venice, received his guests with all his natural pride and haughtiness of manner, blended with the condescending gallantry toward the ladies, and urbanity toward the gentlemen, that was characteristic of his imperious nature.

He had been Doge of Venice scarcely more than seven months, and was a man then of seventy-six years of age, but never man looked back upon a larger course of magnificent triumphs during a lifetime than he.

He had been a soldier, and had routed the King of Hungary and his eighty thousand men with less effort than many a commander requires to put a squad through the ordinary military evolutions.

He had been commander of the fleet. He had been Ambassador at Genoa, and at Rome, and while there it was that he received news of his election to the dignity of Doge.

His was not a nature of simplicity and gentle dignity, and by long years of command his fiery spirit had been raised to an arrogant imperiousness, that had finally become a passion sweeping everything before it.

His courage was that of the magnificent wild beasts of the forest, but not so his magnanimity. He allowed no rival to stand in his way, nor was any opponent of sufficiently small consequence to escape his vindictive notice. He had but one vulnerable point—his young and lovely wife.

Among the brilliant company of masqueraders was a young man of noble blood and handsome person and fine bearing. At length, during the festivities, this youth of patrician birth, having looked too many times upon the wine when it was red, too many times did his gaze fall upon the bewildering beauty of one of the Dogessa's ladies in waiting. He whispered his ardent admiration into her unwilling ear, and her real or feigned displeasure attracted the Doge, who witnessed the scene. With eyes aflame he stepped forward, and commanded him to instantly withdraw from the scene of the festivities.

This public insult because of what he, the offender, who was Michael Steno, pleased to consider but a trifling indecorum, infuriated him, and he withdrew as he was commanded, only to put his wits to work to devise some way of avenging so great an insult to his pride.

At length, after wandering about some time, he found himself alone in the Senate hall, and there across the throne in the dim light, Steno wrote with a piece of chalk a few words that were destined to bring about a tragedy such as even he at that moment little dreamed of.

After writing those staring words full of insulting significance, he quietly went away. The evening passed far into the morning hours, and just before daybreak the guests departed.

The inscription written across the front of the throne first met the horrified gaze of an official of the palace, whom it confronted as he entered the Senate chamber the next morning, and he, affrighted, sought his master.

No words can describe the wrath and unbounded fury of Faliero, as, hastening to the chamber, he beheld the daring insult. That the young and beautiful Dogessa was as spotless as virgin snow is not doubted, but the malicious and cowardly innuendo took the desired effect, and the mind of Faliero was poisoned by the malicious shaft, whose wound was more than he could bear. It

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was not difficult to decide who was the probable offender. Faliero had not forgotten the infamous conduct of Steno, and upon him the accusation of this dastardly deed was laid.

Officers were instantly sent out, and Michael Steno was arrested and brought up before his peers. The task of the tribunal of the forty was not hard, for Steno at once admitted the offence, and stood for judgment with all the monchalance of impudent moral indifference, and left the facts to answer for themselves. The words he had written were in effect these:

"The Doge has a beautiful and young wife, but she is not for him."

Steno was sentenced to two months' imprisonment, which was to be followed by twelve months of exile.

The only fault to be found with this sentence was its exceeding lack of severity, yet to a patrician, a dungeon cell and a year of banishment was a penance bitter to be endured; but Faliero was beside himself with insulted rage because of the lenity of the sentence.

Nothing could have satisfied him other than the beheading of Steno, which punishment, according to his own judgment, Steno richly deserved for so gross a misdemeanor, and Faliero had expected nothing less than this from the decree of the tribunal.

He was stung to the quick because of what seemed to him added insult that Steno was to get off so easily, and he turned his fury from Steno himself to the signory, who had, he believed, betrayed their trust, in order to shield Steno because of his noble birth.

At once and instantly the entire patrician order loomed up before his wrath-distorted vision as a hydra-headed foe before which he, for the first time in all his triumphal life, felt his own impotence. He longed for super-human power that he might with one sweep of the knife sever that hydra-head of his foe and thus put out of existence the signory of Venice, but how could he do this, how might it be brought about, for rest he would not until he had in some way accomplished it.

Like Caligula, he sat brooding over his wrongs.

That evening, as he was alone in his chamber, stern and gloomy and resentful, and full of malice toward those he believed his enemies, a man came on foot and breathless to the gates of the palace and asked to see Marino Faliero at once, as he desired to speak with him regarding a case of justice. Faliero bade them show the man in, and a moment later the stranger stood in his presence.

That he was a plebian was evident from his dress and general appearanc. His face was bruised and blood-stained, and his clothes betokened something like a hand-to-hand encounter with an enemy. He was fairly bursting with wrathful emotion and shaking with the force of the anger that was consuming him. As soon as he found himself in the presence of Faliero he burst into an uncontrollable torrent of impossible speech.

"And who are you?" demanded Faliero, as soon as the flood of the man's tempestuous words could be stayed.

"I am Israel Bertuccio," he replied.

"And your complaint is—"

"I am a workman in the arsenal, and I bear on my face the imprint of the blow given by one who came demanding the service of my men in his own private behalf, and to him I returned answer that he could not have them since they were already engaged in the government's employ and upon its ships, whereupon he struck me full in the face, and I am come hither to learn if I may not be avenged. I appeal for justice!"

"For justice," replied Faliero, with bitter sarcasm, "justice and against one of the signory! That even I cannot procure for myself!"

"Then let us find a way to avenge ourselves!" said Bertuccio, savagely.

An idea struck Faliero. He had in this man an able weapon. Through him might be brought about exactly what he desired of all things to be wrought—revenge upon the signory of Venice!

He found that Bertuccio belonged to a brotherhood—a secret order, and that all his class regarded the signory as implacable enemies. They had been stung by wrongs, and were driven to a spirit of willingness to adopt almost any means to avenge themselves. The hour had come, they would endure no more; this last insult to himself, Bertuccio declared, should serve as the incitement inspiring others to take action for their rights and for justice.

Nothing could have delighted Faliero's secret soul more than did this information. Revolt of the lower classes seemed imminent; why should not the lower classes serve him in this his hour of need, and become his strength and power in this the time of his greatest impotence.

Hours wore away, and Marino Faliero and Bertuccio still remained closeted in secret conference. The night wore to daybreak, and the day lengthened toward another night and yet these two strangely-united confederates sat perfecting their plans. When finally Bertuccio took his leave it was beyond midnight, and the understanding was that he should return the following night.

He came according to appointment, but he did not come alone. His companion was a sculptor, by name, Filippo Calendro.

The Doge and his nephew, Bertuce Faliero, were waiting for them. And together these four laid their plans for one of the most tremendous and vengeful schemes that ever emanated from the brain of man, and the beginning of one of the heaviest tragedies in the history of the world.

Three days were deemed sufficient in which to complete all preparations and on the 15th of April the plans were to be carried out.

The scheme was this, sixteen of the most bloodthirsty of the order were to be chosen as leaders, and each leader was to choose sixteen followers, and arm them to the teeth.

At daybreak on April 15th the bell of St. Mark's, which never struck except by the command of the Doge, was to ring out a loud alarm; at this signal the sixty-four conspirators, rushing from various parts of the city were to come together at St. Mark's, shouting aloud the exciting news that the Genoese fleet had been descried at sea.

The senators, who would be aroused by the tumult would at once come to council, and at that moment, while they were assembled in the piazza, they would be hewn down together, not a man being spared.

Everything went well with the conspirators. Their men were well and wisely chosen and ably drilled, and victory seemed promised to them. All would have gone admirably had it not been for the troublesome conscience of one man who had been shown many personal favours by one of the senators. He hesitated and wavered, and a thousand times was minded to go to Lioni, his benefactor, and warn him against impending danger, but

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his hesitation he kept carefully concealed, for were there not watchful eyes and vengeful hearts, and hands ready to plunge the knife into his vacillating heart at the least sign of treachery on his part?

At last the long expected day came to a close. Upon the following morning the signal would be sounded and the dire deed would be consummated.

It was now midnight. Faliero was sleepless; he was impatient for his vengeance. He paced the floor and watched the flight of the moments.

As the clock struck twelve, a figure shrouded in black disguise, slipped from by-way to by-way like a shadow, and made its way to Lioni's dwelling.

It was Bertrando, the traitor to his order, and him of the troubled conscience, who could no longer hold out against its pleadings, come to warn his patron and benefactor that haste must be made instantly, or the blood of the senators would flood the stones of the piazza,

He roused the household of Lioni and tried to warn them in a few words and escape; but a torrent of questions met his information. They could not understand the necessity for mystery; why did he not speak out? They evidently suspected him of treachery.

Even Lioni grew suspicious of his fond solicitation and ordered him held until he grew more explicit.

There was no other way out of it, Bertrando saw that plainly, and to clear himself he determined to uncloak himself, turn King's evidence, and have his reward. He threw off his disguise and stood forth as a hero and a saviour among them, but first he secured Lioni's pledge for his own personal safety, not only, but for his reward. This Lioni readily gave.

Lioni was paralyzed with horror and amazement. As he listened his amazement rivalled his horror. He ordered Bertrando to be held a prisoner, and he himself hurried out in the darkness of the night to arouse the other members of the senate.

The first two he aroused stealthily hastened to the other senators, and they all went to a chamber in St. Saviour's Convent, and sent for Bertrando, and in a body listened to the same story that he had told to Lioni.

Guards were sent out to the palace of the Doge, and also to St. Mark's.

At the hour when Faliero was expecting to hear the great bell ring out the signal for the execution of the fiendish plot, there came the sound of the tramping of feet, and before he could realize what had happened he was seized and held a prisoner. At the same time the chief confederates were seized by the guards and hurried to the Convent.

To add to the further complication they had been taken even while their weapons were in their hands.

A rack was also brought, and under its tortures their lips found utterance, and they told everything, then they were removed to cells, and shortly afterward an excited crowd of spectators saw their bodies swinging from a gibbet in the gallery of the palace overlooking the piazza.

Over four hundred of their conspirators were also discovered, but did not at once meet their just punishment.

Great and formal preparations were begun for the punishment of Faliero befitting his crime.

A council of ten was formed, by whom crimes against the state were tried, and these ten elected twenty of the signory who should sit with them in consultation. The court of thirty judges was called the Giunta.

At eventide Faliero was led into the hall of council and stood face to face with those whose wholesale massacre he had planned.

It was a pitiful but dramatic scene. Marino Faliero looked about him and saw many there whom, as his guests, he had greeted at the brilliant festivities of so short a time before at the palace. Lips that had smiled upon him there were now muttering imprecations upon him, and every eye looked upon him with the fires of hatred burning within them.

The scene would have moved some men to a softened emotion, brought thus face to face with those, who, had not his schemes been thwarted, would now have been in eternity; many men would have been overcome by the realization of stupendousness of the awful crime from which their hands had been stayed, but not so with Faliero.

In this supreme moment of his downfall and humiliation, and with the penalty of his attempted deed confronting him, he retained all his usual haughty demeanour, and all the fiery vindictiveness that had had possession of him, was now but redoubled, since all was lost to him. There was, perhaps, something sublime in his indifference to everything of this world. He had lost all; he had nothing more to lose, and what remained now was but the death-dealing vengeance of those to whom he would have dealt out the same.

The place of execution was chosen to be the Giants' Stairs, the place where succeeding Doges were invested with the robe and crown of state, midst all customary pomp. Besides this it was agreed that the place for Faliero's portrait in the council hall should be left vacant and veiled in black.

It was now midnight again. At daybreak he must die.

At that hour all Venice was abroad. Men sought for places round about the piazza at the grated bars because from there the topmost stair could be seen, and the topmost stair was the exact spot where, only a few brief months before, Marino Faliero had been crowned. It was now draped in black. The gates below the Giants' Stairs were closed.

In the centre of the top stair of the piazza rested the block and sword.

At the break of day the procession issued forth from the palace and approached the landing in the following order; the ten came first, the members of the senate and the forty; then walked a guard of soldiers, and after them Marino Faliero.

At his right was his confessor with the crucifix in his right hand; at the left hand of the Doge walked the headsman.

They reached the block, and the headsman swept the crown from the head of the fallen Doge, and the mantle of sovereignty from his shoulders.

As he did so then came the first solemn peal of St. Mark's bell that was to toll the knell of his death. As the great brazen tongue clanged a second time he cast himself on his knees and placed his head upon the block.

An instant later the gates were opened amidst the tumultuous shouts of the crowd and the blood of Marino Faliero's headless body drenched the stairs of the spot, where only a few short weeks before he stood vested in the robes of official dignity, amid the acclaim of the throngs and the cheers of the multitude, and where little children had cast their votive offerings of fragrant flowers upon the Giant' Stairs, his head came rolling downward toward the gates.

Luici Cenci.

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BOOK III.—CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING OLERON.

CHAPTER III.

How the three Europeans built a villa residence, replete with many modern conveniences: and how they re-invented things they had been familiar with all their lives through.

It was the morning after King Oleron's feast, and our trio were engaged in making themselves a residence which accorded more with their European tastes. They had made up their minds that a stay on the island was inevitable, at any rate for an indefinite time, and perhaps for ever.

"There's worse places to lay one's bones in than Erma," the Irishman had observed, "although 'tisn't exactly anxious I am to spend the balance of me days here. There's hapes o' little things one'd like, an' can't get. But 'if yez can't be aisy,' so me father used to say when he was hidin' in the woods, 'be as aisy as yez can.' An' bein' me father's favourite son, that's what I intend to do. So, shipmates both, I propose we build us a house fit to live in, an' not a shanty like this one here, where the walls are only put up to help inthruders to get inside."

"This is an excellent framework to start upon," remarked Sneyd, pointing to their present abode. "With a little adding to, it will answer capitally."

The rustic house was situated in a narrow valley. The trees on the steep hill sides sheltered them. A merrily tinkling stream ran before their door. The place smiled with lovely tropical flowers. Yet Nature was the only landscape gardener who had touched it.

They all felt that it was impossible to conceive a fairer spot.

"Well, Sandy, lad!" exclaimed the Irishman, "yez haven't had yer say. There's something on yer mind."

"I was thinking," said Sandy slowly, "what would happen supposing these good people took offence at anything we did, and came down the valley and set upon us?"

"Why, it's kilt we should be! though perhaps a good handful of them 'ud get knocked on the head before we were settled an' done for. But 'don't go for to conjure up a black bogie when the sun's shinin',' as his honour the King remarked yesterday."

"I don't want to. But still there is no harm in looking at possibilities ahead. These aboriginal people are proverbially fickle. Now, do you see that ledge a couple of hundred yards up the hill-side yonder? I've had my eye on it for some time, and the day before yesterday went up to look at it. The rocks are steep below and unclimbable, but there's one path which leads to it at an easy slope. Once there, you'll find the ledge bigger than it looks from here. It's a hundred feet at least, and quite fifty yards long. At the back the rock rises up almost sheer. There are trees enough on the ledge for shelter, and a spring of good water spouts up amongst them. We should be cooler with our headquarters there, for what breeze there is we should be certain to catch; and, besides, we should be on healthier ground. These mists that rise in the valley at nights chill one to the bone, and cannot but be liable to do harm. They breed fevers and calentures, so I've read in Dr. Menteith's book, and once these diseases or agues get into the system, they're never thoroughly shaken out."

"We've been healthy enough so far," said O'Neill, "but it was bred in a bog I was myself, and so perhaps I'm hardened to mists an' moisture."

"An abode that would serve as a fort on occasion isn't to be despised," observed Sneyd thoughtfully. "Sandy's right. These islanders are friendly enough at present; but they might turn round on us. If that blear-eyed Ebry thought it to his advantage to do so, I've no doubt he's got influence enough to stir up a strong feeling in our disfavour."

"But," objected O'Neill, "it would look suspicious if we started building a fort. They're sharp enough. They'd twig it at once. And when they saw we distrusted 'em, why, they'd very likely give us reason for distrust."

"Who spoke of a regular fort, man?" laughed Sneyd. "Sandy didn't mean us to build a redoubt with a glacis, and embrasures to put guns in. We haven't any guns to mount in 'em, if we did build the fort. What he meant was that the ledge was strong by nature, and if the need came, we could block the one path which leads to it, and hold the place easily against a considerable force. Meanwhile the house will be an ordinary house to us and to all observers. It will be situated on high ground, which we believe, very sensibly, to be healthier than the low. And if we have a few hundred feet farther to walk into the rest of the village, well, that is our own look-out, and nobody else need grumble."

"'Sense triumphs over ignorance,' to quote his honour the King again," said the Irishman. "I suppose there's no paper to be signed for ground rint. We may as well go off and look at the demesne at once."

The "demesne," as O'Neill chose to term it, proved very much as Sandy had described. Natural fissures, which very little labour would make a neat path, zig-zagged up the face of the cliff, and the little plateau was barely five minutes

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walk from their present habitation. Half of the little level flat was one thick jungle of rich, rank, tropical vegetation, which, as Sneyd showed, might be easily cleared away to make room for taro, feeiis, or other crops. The rest of the ground was occupied by a banana clump, with the great leaves torn to tremulous ribbons by the constant breath of the trade-wind. The natural space, formed by half-a-dozen trees which had fallen in some storm and lay rotting on the ground in the middle of this little copse, offered a convenient site for the hut. The foliage overhead would form a cool shelter from the sun, and away down through an aisle of tree-trunks, they commanded a view of the low mangrove-fringed shore, the calm lagoon, the white breakers which ever thundered on the reef, and beyond, the restless waters of the deep blue Pacific Ocean.

But the trio did not waste time in admiring all the wealth of beauty around them. Opportunity enough for that hereafter. With sheath-knives they cut the lianes, which twined and intertwined everywhere, and with strong arms they lifted away the litter of those and of the prone, dead trees, piling the whole into an indiscriminate heap, and converting it into a smoking, self-destroying bonfire. It took a couple of days to get the ground cleared, for tropical vegetation grows apace, and the luxurious wealth of undergrowth was almost a solid mass. Then they set to work cutting bamboos on the lower ground, stripping off the delicate, green foliage, docking them to various lengths, and transporting them on to the plateau.

By a unanimous vote of the other two, Sandy had been chosen architect. There had been various discussions as to what form their house should take, and Sneyd and O'Neill had propounded several plans, all more or less unsuitable. But when each had had his say, Sandy produced a piece of bark, on the white inner surface of which was a rude sketch done in charcoal. It represented a house, modified somewhat from those of the islanders, but still on the native lines. There were two rooms in it, each fifteen feet square. There was an eight-foot-wide verandah round them, and the whole was covered by a high-pitched roof, thatched with leaves. Each room was to have a doorway, and two shuttered windows. The walls were to be high, and made of wattle, faced on the inside with broad leaves. And the space above the cross-rafters would serve as a store. One room would be amply large enough for three hammocks. The other room was for a day-dwelling. Or they could sit under the wide verandah.

The other two were enraptured with the plan. "Sandy, bhoy!" cried O'Neill, "av King Solomon could have got yez when he was putting up the pyramids, 'tis a dale handsomer an' usefuller he'd have made 'em when he was about it."

They set about building without hesitation, as soon as the poles were cut, and in a couple of days the framework of the dwelling was complete. The wattling of the walls with flexible lianes, the making of doors and window-shutters, and the thatching of the roof with broad banana leaves, was a far longer process. But by constant hard work in early mornings and cool evenings, with a rest during the midday heat, these matters were completed—bamboo floors were laid down, and the internal walls covered with a smooth layer of the great leaves, which improved both their appearance and utility.

The house was finished. A flowery creeper sprouting almost visibly, had twined itself round a verandah support, and covered a large patch of the roof. Everything was ready for a shift of quarters. So, burdening themselves with their one or two household utensils—the hammocks, a few calabashes, and a smouldering stick—they moved in forthwith, and settled themselves down for a prolonged residence.

They set about building without hesitation.

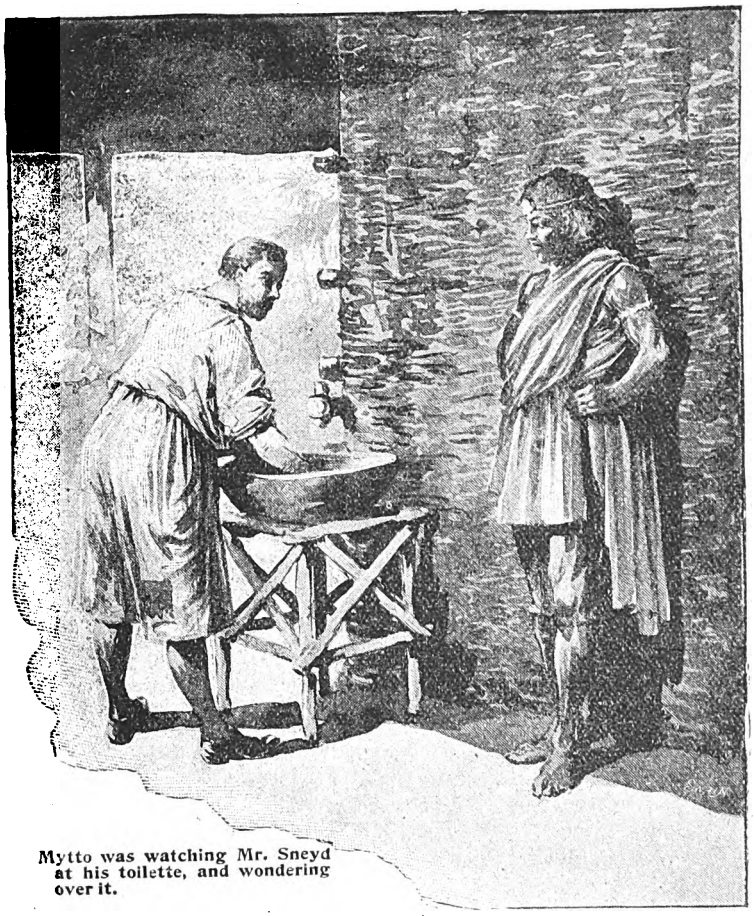
By daytime they worked at clearing the ground destined for their crops of its tangled growth of bush and scrub, a lengthy and tedious process; at tilling the soil as best they could with the rude instruments at their disposal; at getting hold of their daily food in one way and another, and preparing it as best they could. In evenings, when the moon's yellow rays or the silver starlight stole through the interlacing tree-tops, they busied themselves with making one thing and another—chairs, tables, and what not. The light was feeble, and, like blind men, they worked mostly by feel and touch. Their tools consisted of their sheath-knives alone. Their material was mostly bamboo, jointed, mortised, and pegged with laborious care.

O'Neill was the cleverest carpenter. Sailors can turn their hands to anything, from painting a figure-head to making elaborate mats for the cabin door. And where neatness was required he was well to the front, although Sandy was not far behind him. But Sneyd's more varied experience of household furniture led him to make useful suggestions and designs that the other two would never have thought of.

The ex-cornet's reading came back to him, moreover, and by dint of countless hard raps at the door of his memory, he was able to call to mind how certain things of ordinary everyday English use were made or procured.

Take pottery as an instance.

There was not such a thing as a piece of delf in the whole island of Erma; but clay existed; and Sneyd knew that delf was made out of clay. How these last two facts were connected he couldn't think at first, but the details of the process came back to him little by little, and having got his inspiration he proceeded to act on it. A bluff of stiff white clay existed in the valley; that he knew. So he set himself about designing a potter's wheel. The making of this with the primitive appliances at his command was beyond him; but Sandy and the Irishman caught up the



Mytto was watching Mr. Sneyd at his toilette, and wondering over it.

idea, and produced a rude but effective apparatus such as he required.

Manipulating the clay was the next thing to be learnt, and this was not done in a day. But by dint of doggedly sticking to the task, vessels were at length produced, which, not exactly beautiful, were at least of useful shapes.

The next thing was to burn them; and many were the futile attempts before a suitable kiln was produced. But at last all obstacles were overcome, and the first bit of pottery ever made on Erma was produced. That it was misshapen, dirty-brick red, and porous, is true; but the makers viewed it with satisfaction, and the natives looked upon it with admiring awe.

"Av we'd only got a glim to light us while we shmoke our pipes," sighed O'Neill one evening when the sky was overcast, and the verandah was clothed in Stygian darkness.

"Are you sticking the pipe stem in your eye?" Sneyd asked him.

"Ah no, 'tisn't that. I can grope the way to me potatythrap aisy enough. But it's so lonesome sittin' like a litter of foxes in the dark. We'd be merrie by ten times wid an incho' candle to see one another spake wid."

"Have a fire lit," suggested Sandy.

"Too hot."

"Yes," said Sneyd thoughtfully; "I wish we could contrive a lamp of some sort. A torch would do at a pinch, a torch of resinous wood. But then there doesn't happen to be any resinous wood on the island so far as I've discovered. And there's no fat to be got hold of either, or we'd soon make some rushlights. No, I don't see how it is to be contrived. The islanders turn in soon after sundown, and don't need it, but I must confess to a sneaking love for sitting up after dark. At the present moment, now, I want to finish cutting out this spoon, and here I am at a dead lock for want of light to see what I'm doing."

There was silence for a minute or so, which Sandy broke by saying, "I've heard o cocoanut oil. Do either of you know how it's made?"

Neither of them did, so Sandy went on. "It must come either from the shell or the milk, or the white solid stuff; and of the three, the last seems most likely. But the question is how?"

"Boil it in water," suggested Sneyd.

"Squash it," said the Irishman.

"We might try both," said Sandy meditatively. "If the oil's there, either process ought to bring it out."

It was found impossible to conduct the decocting process on a large enough scale for practical use, and so squeezing was decided upon.

The first thing to be done was to make a press. This took some thought, but eventually one was made from cocoanut tree itself. A section of trunk some three feet long was cut out, and the pith extracted. One end of the hollow cylinder thus obtained was plugged securely, save for a small orifice intended as an exit for the oil, should any deign to appear. A piston of solid wood was fitted to the cylinder, and a stout tree some twenty feet long was rigged lever-fashion, so that it could exert great downward force on the upper end of the piston.

The cylinder was packed full of the white contents of old nuts, the piston placed into position, and pressure applied. The contents were compressed to a certain degree, and then weights were fastened to the end of the lever so that the enormous squeezing power would be continuous; after which the apparatus was left. This was at night. By next morning the experimenters were delighted by the sight of a quart of yellowish semi-solid oil—it looked very like butter—in their receptacle; and of a further supply oozing in drop by drop. In the evening it was tested as a luminant. A half cocoanut held a wick of wild cotton fastened to a supporter of delf, and drawing sustenance from oil below. It lighted certainly, and gave out a yellow, smoking flame. The result was not very brilliant, but it was a vast improvement on the era of utter darkness that had gone before it; and so it was prized accordingly.

This, too, was received by the natives with feelings in which astonishment was mingled with awe. The palm tree had been most things to them before—it was the source of more than half the articles they had in daily use—but, otherwise than by burning it bodily, they had never extracted illumination from it. And now that they saw how this could be done, they marvelled much, and revered the white man's genius more than ever.

CHAPTER IV.

How Erman sorcery failed to make water run uphill: how Murtagh O'Neill solved a simple problem in hydrostatics: how matrimony was suggested: and how a festival was interrupted by the ominous arrival of Dajian emissaries.

Mr. Laurence Sneyd was engaged in washing his hands. The dressing-room of his establishment was situate under

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the back of the verandah. There was a large basin with water laid on from the spring through bamboo pipes, which terminated in a bamboo stop-cock. There was a dressing-table, also of bamboo; and on it there were hair-brushes and tooth-brushes, made from fibrous palm stems, which had been slightly unravelled, and then served round with a fibre lashing, to prevent their unravelling further. Add three combs, fabricated from the inevitable bamboo, and you have the whole of the dressing-table.

Mytto was watching Mr. Sneyd at his toilette, and wondering over it. Mytto admired the white men intensely, and rendered sincerest flattery by imitating them in every way that lay in his power; and at present Mytto was wrapped up in awe by the sight of the water-supply. When he wanted to wash his date-coloured skin, he went down to the stream; or else he journeyed a little further, and indulged in a swim in the lagoon. He always went to the water, as his forbears had done before him. So this notion of making the water come to you appealed to him with great force. And the idea was so simple too—as, in good sooth, most valuable mechanical ideas are.

So Mytto took himself off, and busied himself during the next few days in cutting lengths of bamboo with an obsidian knife, and jointing them into a continuous pipe, whereof one end lay in a running stream and the other led to his own front door.

But, to Mytto's dismay, no gushing fountain of water answered his call. Everything was like the white man's. Bamboo tap and all were an exact copy of the original. The machine seemed perfect; the result alone was wanting.

Mytto had not been working on the quiet. The whole of the scattered village knew what he was about, and when the last length of piping was laid in place, there was a strong audience in attendance.

Mytto hailed to them when he made the last connection, and they one and all pressed eagerly forward, to see the first supply spout forth—as crowds will do for similarly unmomentous reason. But there was no gushing stream of cool, sparkling water; it didn't even trickle gently; in fact not a drop appeared.

The crowd looked disappointed, and turned to Mytto for an explanation. Mytto scratched his head perplexedly, gazed at his handiwork, but could not see wherein the fault lay. It was, as far as he could make out, an exact counterpart of the white men's on the Ledge higher up the valley. The problem was beyond his powers to solve.

Just then, as fortune would have it, another spectator joined himself to the outskirts of the crowd. He was one of Ebry's assistant sorcercers—the taller of the two.

Mytto saw him, and was imbued with a happy idea. He beckoned to the melancholy-looking knock-kneed man, who came to the front, nothing doubting. Mytto explained the situation, said the pipe-line was an exact counterpart of the original, and asked for a reason why it wouldn't act.

The assistant sorcerer pondered awhile, with his face hidden in a corner of his *tappa* robe, and then pronounced that the white men had uttered a spell over their tube, which had set it a-going.

"Then," said Mytto, "will you say a similar spell over mine?"

The assistant sorcerer felt himself somewhat cornered. "I know not the white men's spell," he observed.

The crowd, fickle as aboriginal crowds usually are, began to murmur. They were losing faith in their assistant sorcerer.

"Why," exclaimed Mytto in surprise, "if you do not know their spell, then are the white men more powerful than you?"

"Not so," replied the knock-kneed man, making what he considered a bold stroke. "But the white men's spells are different from ours."

"They must be more powerful," suggested Mytto.

"They are not so," repeated the assistant sorcerer, feeling that he must uphold his own branch of the profession.

"Then," said Mytto simply, "say that which will make the pipe-line carry water, and pour it out through the tap."

The assistant sorcerer might have anticipated so obvious a retort, but he was not prepared to meet it.

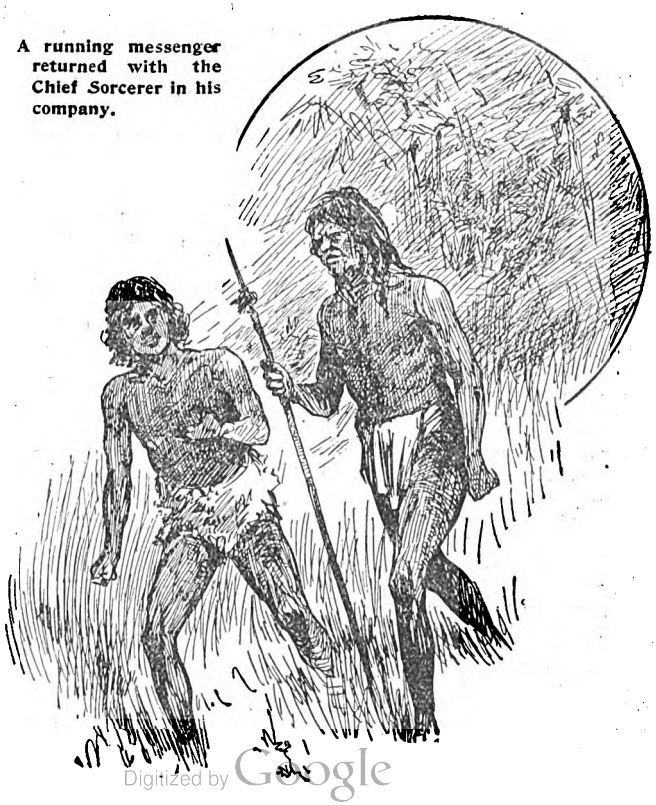
The whole profession of sorcery on Erma was at stake. Perhaps Ebry's master-mind could save it. If Ebry was not discredited, all might yet be well. So he said: "O Mytto! This is beyond my powers. The white man's spell belongs to a section to which my learning has not yet advanced. But Ebry knows all these matters. Let us send, therefore, for him. He who has so many marvels at his command will not be foiled by a trifle such as this."

So a running messenger was despatched, who presently returned with the chief sorcerer in his company.

Ebry heard the tale, and pronounced unhesitatingly that the tube was occupied by a water sprite, who was maliginantly blocking the way.

The crowd spoke its angry feelings against the spiteful water sprite, and asked their chief sorcerer to remove it.

He, wary man, had expected such a request, and was ready for it. He said, "The wicked imp is not of my creation. It is a white spirit, over which I have no jurisdiction. Even though I ravelled the tube to pieces, inch by inch, I should not find it. When it saw the pipe-line being destroyed, then it would know its mission was fulfilled, and would depart below to the place whence it came. For it is the familiar of the white men, set in the pipe by them as an



A running messenger returned with the Chief Sorcerer in his company.

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invisible obstruction, because they are jealous lest the Ermans should learn all their mystic knowledge, and so become as clever as they."

There was a buzz of approval through part of the crowd at this ingenious explanation, but a small section received it silently. Mytto was their spokesman. "The white men," he said, "have voluntarily taught us all their arts. They have shown us how to make pots, how to make an engine they call a 'plough,' which will till the ground far better than our hoe, and a hundred other things. Of their own free will they described to me the working of this water-pipe. Maybe our chief sorcerer, in his infinite wisdom, is right. But before we make a final decision, let us ask the white men themselves."

"Here comes he of the sun-like hair," exclaimed a woman on the outside of the crowd, who had a special admiration for O'Neill's fiery locks.

"Well, bhoys," said the Irishman, coming up, "an' what's in the wind? Is it a wake ye're holdin'? Av it is, it's meself will be proud to jine yez."

No one quite understood this address, but its drift was caught, and a dozen fingers pointed to the bamboo tubes, and a dozen voices shouted out for explanations.

O'Neill held up his hand. "Wan at a time," he said, "av' yez plaze. Here, Mytto, decent man, as this is your holdin' we're on, do you tell me what all the bobbery's about."

Mytto explained in as few words as possible. The Irishman grinned. "Mytto," he said, "'tis but an ignorant haythen y'are afther all. Have yez never grasped the fact that wather won't run up the side of a house, unless you've a squirt to help it? Why, man dear, yer tube's all ridge and furrow, and half of it falls the wrong way. There, I don't believe yez see what I mane now. Ach, but yez are an ignorant lot. Here, give me your mattock, or whatever you call it, an' I'll fix yer watherworks meself."

The good-natured Irishman took a native hoe and set to work. He wielded the clumsy instrument with vigorous arm, scattering stones, clods, earth in liberal profusion, and making the fall a regular and continuous one from the stream to Mytto's door. In an hour and a half he had done this, had thrown a slight dam across the rivulet, so as to improve the bend of water, and had butted all doubtful joints with clay; and then he came and turned the tap.

The crowd had been waiting meanwhile, chattering and expectant. Most of them had their minds evenly balanced between Ebry and the white men. Upon the result of O'Neill's tap-turning would depend their verdict.

The Irishman, with the instinctive wit of his nation, was more or less aware of this, but, confident that the pipe-line was now properly laid, he nipped the bamboo plug with finger and thumb, and gave it a sharp turn.

Water gushed out in a solid stream, turbid and muddy at first, but soon clearing down to a transparent crystal.

Scoffing, sneering faces turned round towards Ebry from all parts. But the chief sorcerer exhibited no outward discomposure. "The white man has exorcised his own devil," he said.

"The white man," retorted O'Neill, who had overheard the words, "the white man has used a little commonsense, which some other people don't appear to possess. He saw that half the pipes slanted uphill, and so just set himself to work to rectify the same, that's all. There's yer watherworks in full swing, Mytto, me bhoy, an' never a penny o' rate to pay for the workin' of it. I'll just take a dhrink to wish yez luck, an' av yez can dish it wid a little palm-wine, it's meself that'll be obliged to yez. Thanks—wheu! Here's more power to yer elbow, an' speedy release from the humbuggin's o' them misdirected sorcerer fellows."

Shortly after this discomfiture of the sorcerers, a message came from King Oleron that he was anxious for the three Europeans to pay him a visit. They did go to see his majesty occasionally, being treated at these times with great deference, as though they were visitors from a higher sphere. But as the Ledge was situated on the outskirts of a village some five miles distant by the coast-line from the royal headquarters, and as the King always received them with all the pomp and circumstance he could muster, they never attended court without a special invitation. They felt that if King Oleron had wanted them he would have fixed their residence near his own; and as he had not done this, but had left them in the village presided over by Maantee and Mytto, his son, they concluded that his majesty had reasons for his action, and respected them without endeavouring to find out what they were.

On this special occasion they patched up their already much-patched clothes with scraps of *tappa*, and, making themselves as tidy as their slender means permitted of, set out to the royal hamlet.

King Oleron had, it seems, commanded their audience more for the pleasures of conversation than for business matters. The old man had a keen eye for the welfare of his subjects. He had encouraged, nay, ordered, the imitation of all those articles of European use that the white men had manufactured for themselves. But he had intended this meeting as an intellectual treat for himself. He wanted to hear more about the histories of men and tribes in that great island whence a new sun rose every morning.

The sun was to King Oleron the greatest and most wonderful object in his universe. He venerated it almost to idolatry. And so he thought that the people who lived round the sun's birthplace ought to be exceptionally favoured.

It is a dangerous thing to be the first to point out the world's rotundity. Galileo found that out; and the Pope and his cardinals at Rome were better prepared—at any rate by education—to receive the news than was this potentate of Erma. So the white men, knowing that they would only be discredited if they broached such a theme, wisely held their tongues, and so tacitly admitted that the sun popped out of the ground before their front doors every morning, thereby doing nobody any harm, and leaving the Kings mind unshaken in its pretty innocent belief.

But they did gently draw away the rose-coloured spectacles of fable, which showed King Oleron Europe as an elysium where the millennium was already in full sway. They told him how the sword was always unsheathed in some corner or other; how the scabbard was often thrown away; and how wars were often as bitter as that old one between Erma and Daji. They assured him that food was not to be had for the asking. There were no banana trees, bread-fruit trees, orange trees, from which any one who hungered or thirsted might reach up his hand and be satisfied.

In fact, they showed him that on the whole he had little cause to be dissatisfied with his own lot, or with that of his people. The little state of Erma was not perfect—no state ever will be this side heaven—but from what they had seen there were, they assured him, few places which offered the chance of so idyllic an existence.

King Oleron was pleased at this great compliment his guests had seen fit to pay him, and said so with courtly phrase. He had somewhat naturally feared that they would be dissatisfied with their surroundings. It gave him great joy to know that they were happy and contented with their lot.

"Erma will be your home now, for always; for many long, peaceful years, I trust, after my old bones have been laid beside my father's. You have no wish to leave us. You will marry and settle down. Look around you. There are in the villages many maidens, comely and amply dowered; you have but to make your choice. Any one of them would be overjoyed to cast in her lot with one of you, and become a faithful, loving wife; and parents would be only too glad to surrender a daughter to such a husband."

"Begob!" exclaimed O'Neill, "a bhoy might do worse,

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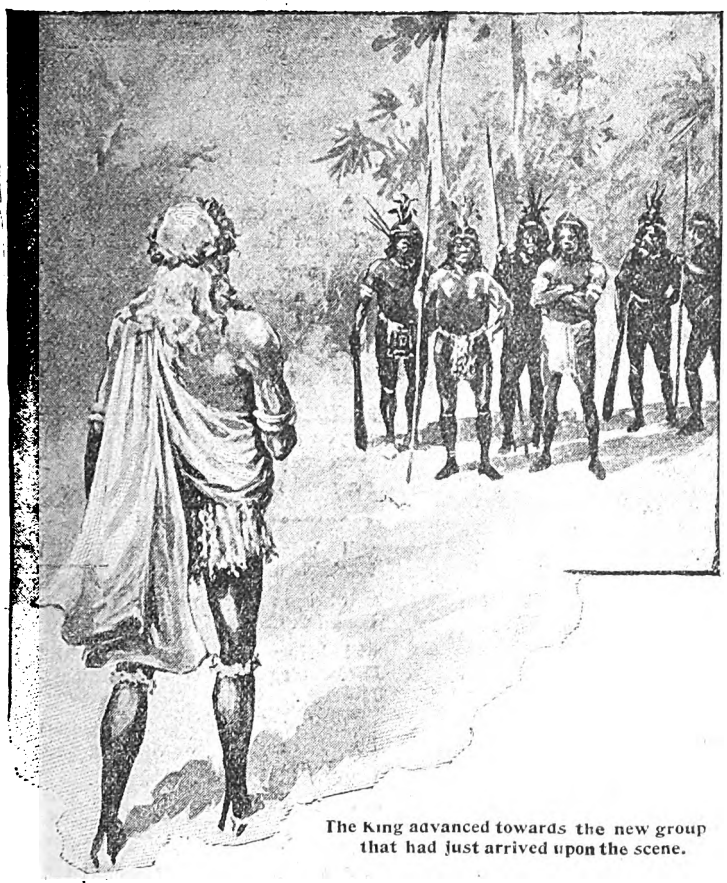

The King advanced towards the new group that had just arrived upon the scene.

yer honour. It s mighty sorry we was for ourselves when first we landed. But, bating that blear-eyed son of a snake, Ebry, who wanted to ate us at first, an' 'ud like to still, I daresay, for that matter, there isn't a soul in the place we don't get on wid. All the men have a pleasant 'morrow to yez,' an' all the maids an' matrons a smile when we meet. We've plenty to ate, an' lie soft o' nights. As to marryin' one o' them olive-skinned beauties, well, I had thought of it before; but, now yer honour puts the idea afresh into me skull, 'tisn't a bit unplasin'. There's Mytto's second sister —Norah, I call her; the name's a bit like that, and she favours another Norah I once knew in County Fermanagh —Norah might say, 'Yes, Murtagh, dear,' av I axed her; an' she'll bring nigh on a score yards o' good dyed *tappa* to the man she weds. So, yer honour, av it's convenient to all parties, I'll go to church wid Norah any day."

The Irishman's matrimonial aspirations had been known to his two comrades for some time. The girl had been in love with him ever since he was brought ashore; that was evident to everyone. And he was extremely fond of her. She was a bit of a beauty in her way—regular features, with large brown eyes and heavy lashes, and a complexion not darker than many a belle of Seville or Granada; limbed like a statue, and adorned with such a wealth of thick, wavy black hair, that, when loosened, it fell below her knees. And, if birth counts as anything in such a community, she was daughter to a village chief, whose authority was second only to King Oleron's. O'Neill had drawn down upon himself a large supply of chaff on account of this attachment; but he took it good-naturedly enough, and pursued his attentions all the same.

King Oleron nodded approvingly at what the Irishman said, and then asked if neither of his companions had wishes in the same direction.

Sneyd laughed and said he admired a good many of his majesty's spinster subjects, but as yet he had no very special preference for one above another. And Sandy Carmichael blushed through his brown skin, and said that he also had not thought of marrying—just yet.

At which his majesty was pleased to make a facetious reply, and a stream of lively talk ensued that was light, frivolous, and enjoyable in the extreme.

King Oleron had arranged a dance for his guests' enjoyment, and presently they moved off to the glade where the feast had been held on their first introduction to the Erman court. Here, in the midst of a crowd of expectant natives, the dancers, some five-and-twenty young girls, were standing in a picturesque group. The arrival of the King was the signal to commence. Accompanied only by the sweet sounds of their own voices, they started a slow, rhythmical measure that was very different to anything either of the Europeans had ever seen before. The three of them looked on entranced. Every gesture of the supple-jointed dancers was studied, yet modest and graceful. The maidens passed and repassed before them, their nimble feet moving noiselessly over the short, soft turf, and their lithe comely forms and arms swaying in perfect unison to the music. It was a lovely sight. Each girl's head was decked with a chaplet of beautiful flowers. Each wore necklaces and bangles of brilliant shells. Each swept her *tappa* robes with grace unsurpassable.

Admiration was plainly stamped on the face of each of our trio. Even Sandy's grim young countenance relaxed into a look of decided approval. They knew the Ermans were fond of the dance, but they were unprepared for such a wonderful display as this.

"Beauty of form and beauty of movement speak in a universal tongue," remarked the King sententiously.

"Begob, his honour's right!" exclaimed O'Neill, "An' it's meself that doesn't wonder at a Turk takin' a dozen wives, av he's trated to sights half as foine as this."

"You polygamous rascal," said Sneyd, with a grin; "and is this the way you show your constancy to the lovely Norah?"

"Arrah, get out wid yez," responded the Irishman. "I said a Turk might be carried away by his feelin's. An' is it a dacent Fermanagh bhoy yez would compare to a haythen Mussulman, that ates no pork an' dhrinks no whiskey? It's meself that'll stick to me Norah like tar to a pair o' new canvas breeches. But there's no harm in looking at another pretty girl betwixt an' between whiles is there?"

"Not being an engaged man myself, I couldn't say," replied Sneyd. "You'd better ask Norah for her opinion. She'll give it you freely enough."

"Faith," said O'Neill, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, "I've no doubt about the same. But, sakes alive, what's the matter?"

The dance had stopped on the instant. The dancers had fled like so many scared deer, and were seeking shelter behind their friends and relatives. The pleased looks had vanished from the islanders' faces. Every countenance showed fear, anger, hatred, or all three combined. The change had taken place as if by magic, and the three Europeans, unable to account for it, looked at one another in hopeless bewilderment. They turned round to ask the King what was the cause of this sudden commotion, but

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found that his majesty had risen to his feet, and was moving away from them. He was advancing towards a new group that had just arrived upon the scene. There was Ebry and his two assistants, and with them four strangers, truculent-looking ruffians, with feathers in their hair, the white stain of sea-salt upon their naked bodies, and club and lances in their hands.

The word "Daji" was murmured by voices behind them, and the Europeans knew what was the strangers' errand.

King Oleron came back to them, his face sad, but under command. In the old war, the Ermans had been forced to purchase peace by promising a yearly tribute of boys and maidens to their cannibal conquerors.

"I must ask you to go back to your dwelling. This is our black day which comes to us yearly. Fate, who walks amongst all men blindfold, has made it arrive on a festival. No," he continued, seeing that Sneyd and O'Neill were going to speak, and judging from their gestures the tenour of their remarks, "No, we cannot avoid the tribute. We are powerless. It must be paid. Go quietly, or they may make still further demands."

The King took his leave.

"The last is a hint that these new-comers may want to take us back with them," said Sandy. "Ebry was suggesting it, I'm certain. I saw him point this way, drawing their attention to us."

"Then," said Sneyd, "as we can't do any good, and as our own skins are in danger, we'd better be off. But it is a dark look out for somebody."

"It will be a dark look-out for one of those blayguards if I man-handle him," remarked O'Neill, turning back, with clenched fists and furrowed brow.

"We might knock them on the head," replied Sneyd, "and do it easily. But where's the good? We'd have the whole island of Daji down about our ears within the week, and what would happen then? The old scenes of horror would be acted over afresh."

"I've me doubts about that," said the Irishman. "But still we may as well foot it back to the Ledge now. Maybe the night, an' a pipe or two o' 'bacca, will rub up our brains a bit; an' who knows but what by to-morrow we mayn't have got some plan for circumventing the man-ating divils?"

So back the three of them trudged to the Ledge, very sick and sorrowful in heart at the thoughts of the awful trouble that had overtaken their kindly friends and neighbours.

(To be continued.)

Its Value.—"Is your picture in the Academy a success?"

"That's what I am wondering. Someone said it was worth the price of admission."

"Somebody has just invented a noiseless cannon."

"That's just the way with science—always giving help where it isn't needed. Why don't some of those cranks invent a noiseless alarm clock?"

A lady desiring to make the most of her choice tap of table beer, the merits of which her servants had discovered, for it disappeared rapidly, thus addressed her butler:

"Daly, what do you think would be the best thing to do in order to save this beer as much as possible?"

"Well, ma'am," replied the butler, "I don't think you could do better than to place a barrel of good strong ale close by the side of it."

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A LIFE'S WORK.

How Can It Be More Pleasantly and Profitably Passed?

This is the title of a new series of capital articles starting in *PEARSON'S WEEKLY* published on January 28th.

The idea is to assist parents to select a career for their children, and each week an article will appear dealing with one subject. This week treats of a clerkship in the Civil Service.

These articles are of intense interest, not only to parents who are anxious to know what to do with their children, but to those who even at the present time occupy situations and are anxious to improve their positions.

P.W. is published every Saturday and costs a penny.

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The Battle of Tooting.

THERE is a general impression that the real estate business in London and its suburbs is painfully dull. In fact, it is said that there are houses almost without number for which no tenants can be procured, even though our leading novelists and poets are employed to write the advertisements, setting forth the beauties and conveniences of which the fortunate tenant will become possessed.

To own but one house which brings in no return for its costs, but upon which taxes must be paid and repairs be made, is a severe strain upon the finances of any man; but the man who owns three or four houses is thereby reduced to abject beggary. Such are the remarks which are daily made concerning the real estate business, and yet it was the impression one day last June, among the inhabitants of Middle Tooting, that a sudden and spirited revival in the real estate had taken place.

About a month ago a real estate agent, whose name is suppressed in order to give him time to reach the sheltering shores of Spain, undertook to obtain a tenant for a house situated in Middle Tooting. To his surprise he was one day called upon by a man who actually wanted the house, and was willing to pay as much rent as would be equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the taxes of the place. The happy agent promptly landed his prey by making him sign the lease, and told him that the house would be ready for him on the 24th of June.

Five days later another man appeared, and expressed a strong desire to rent the house in Middle Tooting for a term of three years, and to make his own repairs. Probably the agent had no intention at the time of indulging in illegal practices, but it was such a novelty to have two persons applying for the same house that he refrained from mentioning to the second man that the place was let, and permitted him to think that it was still in the market.

When the new applicant asked what the rent would be the agent named a price much larger than the price he had previously asked, and remarked that a year's rent must be paid in advance. Doubtless the agent thought that this unusual demand would render it unnecessary for him to undeceive the customer, but the latter unhesitatingly agreed to all the agent's terms, and promising to call the next day and sign the lease, went his way.

Before he fell asleep that night the agent had decided that he would let the house for the second time, pocket the year's rent, and visit Madrid and Grenada, places which he had long desired to see.

It was a wicked resolution, but the agent was a wicked man, and it must be remembered that there are few house agents whose brains would not reel at finding two successive tenants in two days, one of whom was willing to pay a years's rent in advance.

When the second applicant appeared the next day at the agent's office he found a lease waiting for him, bearing a signature which he supposed was that of the owner of the desired house. He paid his advance rent, pocketed the lease, and promised to move into the house on the 24th of June. After he had left the office the agent closed his shutters, locked his door, and disappeared, and by this time is probably on his way to a refuge where no extradition treaty can reach him.

It was about noon on the 25th of June (the 24th having fallen on a Sunday) that two large vans loaded with furniture, and escorted by two cabs, each containing a separate family, drew up at the door of the Middle Tooting house. The two families were those of the two tenants, and the two vans contained the first instalments of their respective household goods.

Mr. Smith, the earliest tenant, was an irascible man, and he lost no time in demanding to know what Mr. Brown, the other tenant, wanted. Mr. Brown sarcastically replied that what he wanted was his house, and what he did not want was any "cheek" on the part of Mr. Smith.

In a short time the conversation between the two became lively. Each shook his lease in the face of the other, and denounced him as a combined swindler and burglar. Meanwhile the cartmen wished to know what they were to do with the furniture, and the inhabitants of Middle Tooting, delighted to find that a free entertainment was in progress, turned out in great force, and filled the street for some distance above and below the contested house.

Foreseeing that argument would neither mend or end the matter, Mr. Smith finally ordered his cartmen to carry his furniture into the house. Mr. Brown instantly issued a similar order as to his furniture, and both enlisted strong contingents of the Middle Tootingers to assist in the operation.

Each tenant felt the importance of occupying the house in advance of his rival and the two heavy vans were unloaded with unprecedented speed. Mr. Smith's gang stormed the front drawing-room with the piano, upsetting the Brown piano on the front steps. The Brown party threw a cloud of skirmishers, armed with chairs, bedsteads, and crockery, into the bedrooms on the first floor, locking the door of each room as fast as it was filled.

Their rivals, however reached the third storey by way of the back windows, and with the help of storming ladders in advance of the Brown forces, and also occupied the cellar with a heavy column of books and rolls of carpeting. The dining-room was the scene of a severe contest, but Mr. Smith hurled iron pots through the windows, and, having thus demoralised the enemy, charged at the head of his forces with pokers and coal-scuttles, sweeping the foe before him in triumph.

The doors of the dining-room were then strongly barricaded with stoves and mattresses, and garrisoned with six dozen bottles of stout. Of course these successes were not gained without heavy losses, and there was scarcely any article of furniture which was not wounded. One of Mr. Brown's cartmen had three ribs broken at the moment of the defeat of the Brown piano, and two Middle Tootingers of the party of Mr. Smith emerged from the dining-room battle with their clothing in rags, and their eyes in the deepest mourning.

When hostilities were suspended, owing to the exhaustion of the stock of furniture, the position of the rival tenants was as follows. Mr. Smith occupied the cellar, the front and back drawing-rooms, the dining-

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room, and the third storey. Mr. Brown occupied the whole of the second storey, and held, with the remains of his piano, the front yard. There is no doubt that, on the whole, the advantage lay with Mr. Smith, but Mr. Brown and his entire family slept on the field of battle, or, to be precise, in the second-storey bedrooms, while Mr. Smith, owing to the loss of his entire stock of toilet crockery, retreated to a neighbouring hotel for the night.

It was the intention of both combatants to send for fresh supplies of furniture early the next morning, and to resume the battle until one or the other should be completely defeated, and ready to surrender at discretion. Mr. Smith was, moreover, resolved to lay in a supply of cases of paraffin oil, with a view of accidentally breaking them on all the more valuable pieces of Mr. Brown's furniture.

The next day, when he arose from his sleep, he was in a less combative and more reasonable frame of mind and decided to hire a lawyer, and leave with the latter the responsibility of conducting future hostilities. The same idea occurred almost simultaneously to Mr. Brown, and accordingly the Middle Tootingers who assembled to witness the resumption of the battle were disappointed to find that lawyers' clerks, bristling with writs of injunction and writs of dispossession, were encamped on the front steps of the house, waiting to serve their papers on Messrs. Smith and Brown.

When the various and intricate law suits which have already begun between Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown will be ended it is impossible to say. In the meantime each party is forbidden to occupy the house or to place any more furniture in it.

The people of Middle Tooting are firmly convinced that there has been a great revival in the real estate business, and householders are forming an association for the purpose of offering the absconding real estate agent a large reward if he will return and undertake to let their houses for them. The memory of the last 25th of June will long remain in Middle Tooting, and the inhabitants, while they are divided into a Brown party and a Smith party, will never cease to be united in admiration of the skill and business capacity of the vanished house agent.

Wm. Lang.

THE CAVALRY OFFICER AND HIS UNKNOWN LOVER.

The period of Napoleon's career when at its zenith is full of romantic adventures as connected with the history of the officers' lives that served under the great captain. He was quick to observe merit, and prompt to reward it, and this it was that made his followers so devoted to him, and so anxious to distinguish themselves by prowess in battle, and strict soldierly conduct in the Emperor's service.

Colonel Eugene Merville was an attaché of Napoleon's staff. He was a soldier in the true sense of the word—devoted to his profession, and brave as a lion.

Though very handsome and of a fine bearing, he was of humble birth—a mere child of the camp, and had followed the drum and bugle from boyhood.

Every step in the line of promotion had been won by the stroke of his sabre, and his last promotion from major of cavalry was for a gallant deed which transpired on the battlefield beneath the Emperor's own eye.

Murat, that prince of cavalry officers, loved him like a brother, and taught him all that his own good taste and natural instinct had not led him to acquire before.

It was the carnival season in Paris, and young Merville found himself at the masked ball in the French Opera House. Better adapted in his taste to the field than the boudoir, he flirts but little with the gay figures that cover the floor, and joins but seldom in the giddy waltz.

But at last, while standing thoughtfully and regarding the assembled throng with a vacant eye, his attention was suddenly aroused by the appearance of a person in a white satin domino, the universal elegance of whose figure, manner, and bearing convinced all that her face and mind must be equal to her person in grace and loveliness.

Though in so mixed an assembly, still there was a dignity and reserve in the manner of the white domino that rather repulsed the idea of a familiar address, and it was some time before the young soldier found courage to speak to her.

Some alarm being given, there was a violent rush of the throng towards the door, where unless assisted, the lady would have materially suffered. Eugene Merville offers his arm, and with his broad shoulders and stout frame wards off the danger. It was a delightful moment; the lady spoke the purest French, was witty, fanciful, and captivating.

"Ah! lady, pray raise that mask and reveal to me the charms of feature that must accompany so sweet a voice and so graceful a form as you possess."

"You would perhaps be disappointed."

"No, I am sure not."

"Are you so very confident?"

"Yes. I feel that you are beautiful. It cannot be otherwise."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the domino. "Have you never heard of the Irish poet Moore's story of the veiled prophet of Khora san—how, when he disclosed his countenance, its hideous aspect killed his beloved one? How do you know that I shall not turn out a veiled prophet of Khorassan?"

"Ah, lady! your every word convinces me to the contrary," replied the enraptured soldier, whose heart began to feel as it had never felt before; he was already in love.

She eludes his efforts at discovery, but permits him to hand her to her carriage, which drives off in the darkness, and though he throws himself upon his fleetest horse he is unable to overtake her.

* * * * *

The young French colonel becomes moody; he has lost his heart, and knows not what to do. He wanders hither and thither, shuns his former places of amusement, avoids his military companions, and, in short, is as miserable as a lover can well be, thus disappointed.

One night, just after he had left his hotel, on foot, a figure muffled to the very ears stopped him.

"Well, monsieur, what would you with me?" asked the soldier.

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"You would know the name of the white domino?" was the reply.

"I would indeed!" replied the officer, hastily. "How can it be done?"

"Follow me."

"To the end of the earth if it will bring me to her."

"But you must be blindfolded."

"Very well."

"Step into this vehicle."

"I am at your command."

And away rattled the young soldier and his strange companion.

"This may be a trick," reasoned Eugene Merville; "but I have no fear of personal violence. I am armed with this trusty sabre, and can take care of myself."

He soon found the vehicle stopped, and he was led blindfolded into a house.

When the bandage was removed from his eyes he found himself in a richly-furnished boudoir, and before him stood the domino just as he had met her at the masked ball. To fall upon his knees and tell her how much he had thought of her since their separation, that his thoughts had never left her, that he loved her devotedly, was as natural as to breathe—and he did so most gallantly and sincerely.

"Shall I believe all you say?"

"Lady, let me prove it by any test you may put upon me."

"Know, then, that the feelings you avow are mutual. Nay, I have something more to say."

"Talk on for ever, lady! Your voice is music to my heart and ears."

"Would you marry me, knowing no more of me than you do now?"

"Yes, if you were to go to the very altar masked!" he replied.

"Then I will test you."

"How, lady?"

"For one year be faithful to the love you have professed and I will be yours—as truly as Heaven shall spare my life."

"Oh, cruel, cruel suspense!"

"You demur?"

"Nay, lady, I shall fulfil your injunctions as I promised."

"If at the expiration of a year you do not hear from me then the contract shall be null and void. Take this half ring," she continued, "and when I supply the broken portion I will be yours."

He kissed the little emblem, swore again and again to be faithful, and pressing her hand to his lips, bade her adieu. He was conducted away again as mysteriously as he had been brought thither, nor could he by any possible means discover where he had been, his companion rejecting all bribes, and even refusing to answer the simplest question.

* * * * *

Months roll on. Colonel Merville is true to his vow, and happy in the anticipation of love.

Suddenly he was ordered on an Embassy to Vienna, that gayest of all European capitals, about the time that Napoleon is planning to marry the Archduchess Maria Louisa.

The young colonel is handsome, manly, and already distinguished in arms, and becomes at once a great favourite at Court, every effort being made by the women to captivate him, but in vain; he is constant and true to his vow.

But his heart was not made of stone; the very fact that he had entertained such tender feeling for the white domino had doubtless made him more susceptible than before.

At last he met the young Baroness Caroline Waldorff, and in spite of his vows he loves her; he secretly reviles the engagement he had so blindly made at Paris.

She seems to wonder at what she believes to be his devotion, and yet the distance that he maintains. The truth was that his sense of honour was so great that, though he felt he really loved the young baroness, and even that she returned his affection, still he had given his word, and it was sacred.

The satin domino is no longer the ideal of his heart, but assumes the most repulsive form in his imagination, and becomes, in place of his good angel, his evil genius.

Well, time rolls on; he is to return in a few days; it is once more the carnival season, and in Vienna, too, that gay city.

He joins in the festivities of the masked ball, and what wonder fills his brain when about the middle of the evening the white domino steals before him in the same white satin dress he had seen her wear a year before at the French Opera House in Paris.

Was it a fancy?

"I come, Colonel Eugene Merville, to hold you to your promise," she said, laying a hand lightly upon his arm.

"Is this a reality or a dream?" asked the amazed soldier.

"Come, follow me, and you shall see that it is reality," continued the mask pleasantly.

"I will."

"Have you been faithful to your promise?" asked the domino, as they retired into a neighbouring saloon.

"Most truly in act, but alas! I fear, not in heart!"

"Indeed!"

"It is too true, lady, that I have seen and loved another, though my vow to you has kept me from saying so to her."

"And who is this that you thus love?"

"I will be frank with you, and you will keep my secret?"

"Most religiously."

"It is the Baroness von Waldorf," he said, with a sigh.

"And you really love her?"

"Alas, only too dearly," said the soldier sadly.

"Nevertheless, I must hold you to your promise. Here is the other half of the ring; can you produce its mate?"

"Here it is," said Eugene Merville.

"Then I, too, keep my promise!" said the domino, raising her mask, and showing to his astonished view the face of the Baroness von Waldorff!

"Ah, it was the sympathy of true love that attracted me after all," exclaimed the young soldier.

She had seen and loved him for his manly spirit and character, and having found by inquiry that he was worthy of her love, she had managed this delicate intrigue, and had tested him, and now gave to him her wealth, title, and everything!

They were married with great pomp, and accompanied the Archduchess to Paris.

Napoleon, to crown the happiness of his favourite, made Colonel Eugene Merville at once General of Division.

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Ewart Irwin.

The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER LII. *(continued).*

PARIS TAKEN.

THESE things became known in the Chamber of Deputies, which, with the Senate, was in perpetual session, and Ministers quailed before the furious interpolations hurled at them from all quarters, without order or decorum, or semblance of debate.

At last M. Bourgeois managed to gain a hearing. He had the courage of his convictions, and uttered that which was in all men's hearts, but which none had hitherto dared to speak.

"M. le Président," he cried in ringing tones, "France has been led into abysmal depths of folly by the incapacity and wilful arrogance of her self-styled rulers. This is a war of individuls, not of nations. These soldiers thundering at our gates are the avengers of a crime; our citizens, who are being shot down in the streets by their own brothers, are the sad victims of a ministerial blunder. Shall no one save France? Is my life to be taken as a traitor because I proclaim these awful truths? Be it so, I will die cheerfully if thereby my voice shall prevail in the cause of my oppressed and distracted country!"

A fierce outburst of denunciation drowned his speech, but he stood coldly impassive through it all, and it was a highly significant fact that when a member of the Extreme Left rose and moved the adjournment of the Chamber until 9 p.m.—it being then six o'clock—there was hardly a dissentient.

The representatives of the people wished to take counsel with each other before they committed themselves in open debate.

When the House re-assembled, it was noted that neither M. Bourgeois nor M. Hanotaux were present, which was odd, for between such antagonists *rapprochement* was surely impossible? It was even rumoured that they had met to fight a duel forthwith, but reasonable men scouted the suggestion.

Meanwhile some comfort was taken from the sensible appeal made by a subordinate Minister. He asked members to give their support to the Government, at least, until the morrow. The Chamber would not adjourn throughout the night, and half hourly bulletins of a thoroughly authentic nature would be issued.

All knew what this statement signified. An attack was expected that night. If it was successfully repelled the Government would still strive to grapple with the situation. If not—ah, who could say what would happen?

General Saussier was more energetic than ever.

He felt sure that the Porte de Versailles would be the ultimate objective of the British advance, and he placed the district between the Fort d'Issy and Vanvres in such a complete state of defence that even under the demoniac conditions of the previous night's fighting, anything like a sustained assault would be out of the question. Still uninformed as to the exact nature of the weapon used by the English—which, as Lord Roberts surmised, was discussed with bated breath by every human being in Paris—he realised its properties sufficiently to endeavour to minimise it by preparing huge bonfires at every available point, and these were to be lighted at the first sign of an attack in force.

When, therefore, two divisions of the British Army came in touch with the French outposts a little before midnight some very desperate and determined fighting took place without any definite result being achieved.

The Chamber of Deputies were cheered by the report that their soldiers were holding the position with splendid effect, and Lord Roberts was almost unmanned by the knowledge that his brave troops were suffering so grievously with no apparent hope of success.

Their mission was to spend themselves and be spent in the hopeless task of striving to carry an impregnable position, but they were in reality contributing as fully towards the ultimate victory as were the gallant comrades whose happier lot it was to first surmount the inner line of the fortifications.

For Alleyne's and Massy's Special Service Corps were now marching swiftly towards the real point of the attack, through the suburb of Montrouge, with its triple roads to Paris by the Portes de Chatillon, d'Orléans, and de Montrouge.

News of their progress reached General Saussier at his station in the Rue de Vaugirard shortly before one o'clock.

Three small forts *en route* had been captured with the same exasperating ease that had accompanied the attack on their mighty neighbours twenty-four hours earlier.

Quick to scent the new danger, the French Commander-in-Chief galloped along the Boulevard Lefévre and Boulevard Brune, followed by his staff. Collecting all the available troops in the locality, and ordering two divisions which were bivouacked in the Parc Montsouris to come up at the double, he flung open the three gates and poured thousands of men into the congeries of houses and gardens that make up this well-known suburb.

In so doing he unwittingly created the very conditions desired by his adversaries.

The astounding effects of the electric rifle, to call it by its common but inaccurate title, were soon demonstrated when a hand to hand struggle commenced.

At Vanvres and Issy, where the combatants were equal in arms and valour, the loss was heavy on both sides; and, if anything, the French had the better of the fray owing to the strength of their position.

But in Montrouge the odds were entirely in favour of the British. Strive to picture what it means in a battle when every shot fired on one side cannot fail to maim or kill an opponent. There was no opportunity for faulty marksmanship. The Englishmen were now so wholly imbued with belief in their invincible weapon that they were as cool and methodical in action as though they were going through the manual and firing exercise on a barrack square. There was no hurry or confusion, or indiscriminate firing. The more nervous their foes the more rapidly they fell. Line after line of determined assailants withered before the all-devouring rays of piercing light. Men were mortally struck, they knew not how or whence. They strove madly to burst through the deadly zone of death that environed them, but a planet might as well seek to depart from its predestined path through space.

Hours afterwards, the majority of the attacking force found that their hands were badly blistered with the heat of the rifle barrels, but of this they knew nothing during the stress of the fight.

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General Saussier, impetuously urging on his men to stem the steady progress of the British, was unconsciously giving effect to the views expressed by Lord Roberts in the case room of the Fort de Buc. He was now convinced that the sustained conflict at Vanvres was but a feint, and that the real attack was being delivered here.

But he also realised that the end had come, so he spurred onward his powerful charger, whilst he shrilly vociferated: "*En avant, mes enfants, en avant.*" Better to die in front of the walls of Paris than live to see his beloved city again occupied by the foe.

The momentary glare of a French volley revealed his gigantic frame to the eyes of an officer of the 42nd, who was directing the fire of his men.

"Shoot the horse!" he shouted in the ear of a brawny Scot, who was about to cover the general's colossal frame. The order came just in time. A second later the powerful animal which carried the Governor of Paris jumped into the air, with a bullet in his brain, and crashed to the earth with his unwieldy rider.

It was sufficient. When General Saussier regained his breath and his senses two hours later, he was able to sample some Scotch whisky, and take an intelligent interest in the mechanism of the new rifle, which was explained to him by an old acquaintance, Major Harington, ex-junior military attaché at the British Embassy.

—— and crashed to the earth with his unwieldy rider.

Within a few minutes after the fall of the French Commander-in-Chief, the Colonels of the 42nd Highlanders, the Royal Fusiliers, and the 18th Royal Irish, which regiments respectively led the three avenues of approach to the walls, perceived that the psychological moment for a resolute advance had arrived.

Unable to communicate with or see each other, they were individually led at the same time to form this conclusion by the obvious demoralisation of the troops to which they were opposed.

For, truth to tell, the incident of Rouen had repeated itself.

The best soldiers in the world are the most difficult to control when reason and discipline alike fail to hold men to their duty.

Stupefied, frantic, demoralised by the supernatural method of the British attack, the battalions which General Saussier had hurried into Montrouge were now rushing back into the city by the three gates through which they made their exit. When the guards made an effort to raise the drawbridges and barricade the double entrance to each gate, they were ruthlessly cut down by the infuriated masses of men who saw their only avenue of escape from death thus threatened.

Heedless now of the flying enemy, the three British regiments raced along the chaussées to find their progress practically unhindered, and each set up a wild yell of triumph as they found themselves within the walls.

Which of the three was the first to enter Paris is a question that cannot be determined here. It formed a fruitful subject for discussion at mess dinners for decades. In the canteens of Aldershot and the Curragh it led to many a darkened optic and damaged nose. The newspapers of the respective countries vehemently declared that national prejudice alone prevented the others from admitting the just claims of England, Scotland, or Ireland, as the case might be, to the distinguished honour of having first gained the interior of the city.

Even Lord Roberts shied at a definite decision.

"The leading regiments of General Massy's division," ran the words of his famous dispatch, "entered Paris simultaneously, *so far as can be learned*, about 1.25 a.m."

This nice point did not trouble the Chamber of Deputies when the news came by telephone, from the Station de Montrouge, that the Porte d'Orléans ("a tremendous argument in our favour," said the Fusiliers afterwards) had been forced, and that British troops (undoubtedly a mixed force of Highlanders and Irishmen) were even then advancing along the Avenue du Maine.

But a check was now experienced.

Lord Roberts had laid his plans entirely upon the presumption that the assault would be effective. What would happen were it otherwise, he never asked himself, for that way madness lay.

When Major Harington taxed the splendid powers of his hunter to the utmost in the delirious race back to the spot where he knew he should find the Commander-in-Chief, the latter was even then superintending the advance of the relief divisions.

He kept on pouring brigade after brigade into Paris, and sent Harington back as quickly as he had come to ascertain if the flanking movement towards the Porte de Versailles had been efficiently carried out, whilst other aides were dispatched with imperative orders to Generals Massy and Alleyne to entrench themselves in the streets between the Boulevard d'Italie and the Rue de Vanvres.

So implicitly did Lord Roberts trust his lieutenants, and so important did he deem the work of expediting the march of the reserves, that it was not until 3 a.m. that he personally entered the city by the Porte de Montrouge.

Stubborn and persistent street fighting had been in progress during the interval. As the first faint streaks of daylight rose over Paris the position was still critical and dubious. The whole of the fortifications from the Seine at Point du Jour to the Porte d'Orléans were in the possession of the British, but the men were almost exhausted by the heavy marching and the strain of the fight, whilst fresh troops were still swarming across the river from the north and north-east.

When his lordship reached the front at the Gare de Sceaux it was more than probable that the advancing day would witness another big battle, and the outlook was anything but promising. Indeed, were the issue left to the army, France was still defiant and even dangerous.

But other elements were at work, and in the ultimate clash of events they predominated.

At 2.30 a.m. the Government had resigned. A Ministry of Conciliation was hastily formed, and at 3.15 a.m. an officer bearing a flag of truce rode down the Boulevard Raspail bearing a letter from M. Bourgeois, countersigned by the President of the Republic, which he handed to Lord Roberts.

"For the sake of our people and of yours," read this brief message, "let there be peace."

"Is M. Bourgeois the Premier?" said his lordship.

"Within the hour," was the reply.

"Tell him, then, that I will meet him here within half-an-hour," said the British Commander-in-Chief, "and communicate to him the demands of England, if he be empowered to accept them."

In less than the allotted time, the President and M. Bourgeois both made their appearance.

It was no season for diplomatic fencing or laboured civility.

"My instructions are definite and explicit," said Lord Roberts, "I can only ask you to spare France."

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when the two notable Frenchmen were introduced to him. "I can offer no terms save those of unconditional surrender."

"I can only ask you to spare France," said the President. "She is not to blame. Punish her rulers if you will, for I am chief of them."

"Unconditional surrender means anything or nothing," exclaimed M. Bourgeois. "Who shall fix a limit to its significance."

"England and America," replied Lord Roberts.

"An honourable tribunal. I accept," cried the President.

"France accepts," said M. Bourgeois.

And whilst the fateful words still rang in the ears of the British General, there came through the open doorway of the room in which the meeting was held the fitful sounds of distant firing towards the Champs de Mars, where the intelligence of the armistice had not yet penetrated.

They were the last tokens of warfare between Christian races, the dying cries of the horrific demon which had waged so deadly and so prolonged a conflict with civilisation.

The war was ended.

CHAPTER LIII.

How England Received the News.

It was a clear calm morning, one of those serene morning of September which are the glory of the English climate. London looked cool and fresh, and there was a joyousness in the air as her citizens cracked their million eggs, took their innumerable 'buses, and rolled by devious routes from all points of the compass to the city. There was an omen in the placid beauty of the day, did they but know it. For the war was at last over, and peace—universal peace—reigned over the entire world. The last echoes of the cannon had died away, and no man raised his sword against his brother.

But shortly after nine o'clock extraordinary excitement convulsed every newspaper office in Fleet Street. News editors lost their calmness, foremen printers turned pale and trembled, and even the phlegmatic compositor affected agitation. For a telegram of supreme importance had just arrived, and the battle of armed men was changed now into a battle of journals. Who should be the first to announce the news to an unsuspecting world?

"England is saved!" exclaimed the too impressionable sub-editor of the Evening News as he read, in feverish excitement, the tantalising tape.

"Never you mind about England being saved," observed his superior firmly, throwing away the end of his eighteenth cigarette, "what *you've* got to do is to scoop the Sun!"

It was a hard, unsympathetic saying; but it was business. And everyone proceeded to scoop.

Who shall describe the contest in all its alternations of hope and despair, its fluctuations of failure and success? If the Sun was first at Piccadilly Circus, the News reached Tottenham Court Road three minutes before. It was the Echo's boast that the inhabitants of Shepherd's Bush would have remained unenlightened for hours save for itself, whilst the pallid Star gleamed proudly and solitary at Clapham Junction. But no one, other than a judge trained in Jubilee handicaps and Royal Hunt Cups, could determine which newspaper first rounded Cheapside or touched Charing Cross, or triumphant gained the Bank—although it was the boast of the News that it accomplished this last feat by half a neck.

Nor did it matter. The machines could not print fast enough to meet the demand. As first was heard the miraculous cry: "The fall of Paris," there came a shock of bewilderment which was followed by a wild rush for the papers. With shaking hands and beating hearts, the excited crowds seized them and tore them wildly open. It was true! There, beneath prodigious headings that sprawled half down the column, was the brief but all sufficing paragraph.

"Last night Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, under cover of a feint towards the Seine, made a strong attack upon the southern lines of the fortifications of Paris. The attempt was completely successful, and early this morning the city fell into the hands of the British troops. The President of the Republic has capitulated and there is now cessation of hostilities."

Perhaps—in Paris—but in triumphant London there was fierce fighting for the newspapers. No one gave heed to the price demanded. Shillings, half-crowns even sovereigns were tossed to the happy newsboys by exultant citizens who now learnt for the first time that England's power was supreme and her mighty empire safe beyond possibility of attack. As the news rushed along, the tension of public excitement became stronger and stronger. The wildest evidences of rejoicing were to be observed. Everything was forgotten, all business laid aside, no word spoken save on this marvellous and glorious news which breathed peace and prosperity once more upon a stricken and suffering people.

There was complete and absolute derangement of traffic and business. No one wanted to go anywhere. No one wanted to do anything. Where each one learned the news, there he stayed in eager discussion and warm felicitations with such strangers as he met. The approaches to the City were thronged with crowds reckless of time and place, feeling nothing but the pulsations of a common patriotism and the common joy of a national deliverance.

News is sometimes laggard in its flight, and with broken wing flits feebly to distant suburbs. But in grave affairs there is something mysterious in its incredible speed. London was not long in feeling to its uttermost parts the thrilling ecstasy of the glorious intelligence. That modern Perseus, the ubiquitous newsboy, borne along by train or cart, or rushing on bicycle, woke up Kensington from her dreams, pierced the slumbers of St. John's Wood, fluttered the placid bosom of Brixton, and, even in the indefinable solemnity of Finsbury and New Barnet, brought irregular and disturbing agitations. The tumultuous swirl of excitement in the City sent forth its ripples to the outermost regions, and in a moment the six millions of greater London were convulsed with the same delirium of joy.

Words are vain and ineffectual to paint certain moments of high-pitched emotion. Nor can they describe the strange, restless, inexplicable mood which drove from every suburb and every district the people of the capital into its main thoroughfares. It was as if to be away from the burning centre of national rejoicing were unbearable. There was a fierce desire to take an individual share in public demonstration.

For this unwonted thing had at last occurred. London so torn and divided, so scattered in its parts, so separated in its interests, so lacking in a common centre of public life—with every township regardless of its neighbour, each street indifferent to the next one—like some grotesque animal that has a hundred nerve centres, each self-sustaining and independent in a large measure upon the main seat of life—this inorganic city had at last become one, organic and homogeneous. All its private interests were fused by the fervent heat of patriotism into a common feeling. Distinctions and differences were lost. The single impulse was to gather together, to express in one vast note the cry of mutual exultation.

Thus there flowed into the centre of London great crowds anxious to catch the enthusiasm of others and to express their own. Every face was bright; it was more than a happy city, it was a happy nation.

Beyond all, the Mall—that noble boulevard that stretches through St. James's Park—was crowded with expectant throngs. Before Buckingham Palace a dense mass of people waited patiently with excited speech and much cheering,

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each one eager but contented, awaiting some sign of royal recognition.

And such sign was not wanting. When the Ministers had met as hurriedly as might be, and with heartfelt thankfulness heard the news—oppressed in some cases by an emotion that was almost overpowering—the leading members of the Council of National Defence drove to the Palace to give official tidings to the Queen.

Hence it was that at twelve o'clock those who occupied the roadway and stretched far down the lovely avenue of the Mall, had the satisfaction of seeing Her Majesty appear upon the balcony with the Prince upon her right and Lord Wolseley upon her left, whilst around her were her Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, and Mr. Balfour. Deafening cheers rent the air, renewed again and again, as with a bright smile Her Majesty bowed to her people. It was a fresh evidence of her graciousness that she did not forget the man to whom the splendid victory was mainly due, and as she gave her hand to the Commander-in-Chief, who kissed it respectfully, redoubled enthusiasm prevailed, until the incident, almost overburdened with the strain of excitement, was terminated by the withdrawal of the royal party. It was impossible to subdue the feelings of personal emotion by commonplace activity. Everyone roamed through the streets and discussed in public places or met in drawing-room and studio, full of the one topic.

And so the day sped. There was sadness, no doubt, in the purlieus of Soho, but it was not manifested with undue emphasis abroad. When a Frenchman made his appearance, the good-humoured Englishman treated him with a consideration that did him infinite credit.

Sometimes the temptation of a little badinage was too strong to be resisted. A distinguished French *savant* made his appearance in St. James's Restaurant, and was moodily drinking his claret when a couple of healthy, hearty Britons took up their places at his side.

M. Trochu—that was his name—sighed deeply, and, after a few diffident glances at his companions, asked in hesitating tones and in broken accents:

"It is, gentlemen, that you can tell me vot ze condizions are of truce in my belofed Paris?"

His voice trembled, and there was something pathetic in his earnestness which even touched the hearts of his listeners. But the devil of mischief sprang in, and one of them answered:

Sometimes the temptation for a little bandinage was too strong to be resisted.

"We have only heard a few details, sir, and they do not amount to much; but it appears that the Bridge of Austerlitz is to be demolished and the Eiffel Tower torn down. But, of course, you can build others in their place."

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "What next?"

"The Venus de Milo and your Elgin Marble are, of course, to be removed to the British Museum, and it is proposed to take down and re-erect the Church of St. Germain L'Auxerrois in Brixton."

The Frenchman groaned and hid his face in his hands.

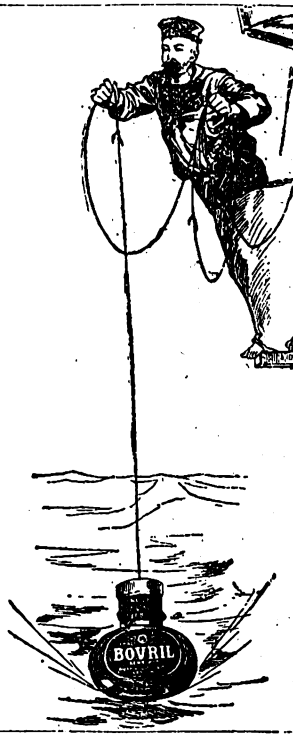
(*To be continued.*)

A Sound for Safety.

As the sailor, to avoid the dangers of shallow water, finds his safeguard in the sound, so the human constitution, threatened by the treacherous changes of the winter season, finds a safeguard in "Bovril."

BOVRIL

supplies the bodily heat necessary to throw off the colds and chills of winter, to ward off the lurking danger of influenza, and to fortify the system against the attacks of disease.



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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

IX.—An Impromptu Excursion.

"Now, my dear," exclaimed Mr. Timmins, as he dashed into the room, "bustle about. It's now eight o'clock; the boat for Clacton starts at nine thirty, and I'm going. I'm not the man to go pleasuring alone. I want society, and there's no society, Mrs. Timmins, that I admire so much as yours."

Mrs. Timmins flushed up with pleasure. "That gives me an hour and twenty-five minutes to dress. I can do it in that time," she said.

"I don't see how you can make that out. The boat leaves from the Old Swan Pier, Mrs Timmins; it doesn't leave from our front door, there, and you haven't mor'n an hour to dress. I'll shave while you are getting ready, and we'll take dinner to-day within the sound of the surf, right within the sound of the surf, you know."

Mr. Timmins stropped his razor, and shaved himself carefully. Mrs. Timmins went from one cupboard to another, and threw everything out on the bed. In half an hour Mr. Timmins was prepared for the voyage, and admonished Mrs. Timmins to bestir herself.

"But I haven't commenced yet?" objected the lady.

"Haven't commenced! What have you been doing all this time? What have you been up to? Do you know it's half-past eight?"

"Well, my dear, you were at the glass shaving, and I didn't want to disturb you."

"Oh, you didn't! Of course not! You can't put on a frock without the glass, can you? You've got to have a looking-glass to button your boots. D'you suppose you can get ready in half an hour? Why weren't you ready when I came in?"

"Never mind, dear, I'll be in time. You go down in the parlour, and I'll be there in a minute."

Mr. Timmins growled his way downstairs. Mrs. Timmins hurried on her skirt, put on her hat, and then prepared to dress herself.

"Are you ready?" bowled Mr. Timmins, when he'd waited about three minutes.

"In a minute," piped Mrs. Timmins, feeling round the small of her back after an invisible string.

"Perhaps I'd better go over and tell the boat to come round for you in the morning. Maybe you're acquainted with the steamboat. P'raps you've got influence enough with that steamboat to make it wait a month or two for you," and Mr. Timmins went out on the steps and glared up and down the street.

Mrs. Timmins took off her hat, brushed her hair, and screwed herself round like a giraffe to find another string. Then she opened the top drawer, and pulled half a dozen pieces of lace out of a green box. Putting her fingers to her lip she began to consider which piece she had better wear.

"If you're coming with me, you've got to start!" bawled Mr. Timmins. "What do you take me for, a season ticket, that you can go on any time? Are you coming?"

"In a minute. I'll be there in a minute," gasped Mrs. Timmins, clutching the piece of lace she didn't want. "I'm only looking for my parasol."

Mr. Timmins thumped the balusters for about a minute.

"What's the matter with you now? What under the sun are you up to? Do you know I asked you to go to Clacton about six weeks ago? How many clothes are you putting on? How much toggery do you need? If I can find an engine powerful enough, I'm going to have you dressed by steam hereafter until the fuel gives out. Are you going to Clacton with me or not?"

"Yes, dear, I'm ready," and Mrs. Timmins rustled downstairs. "Won't you please pin the centre of my overskirt to the centre of my dress?"

Mr. Timmins went at it. Mrs. Timmins pulled her hat round straight and drew on her gloves, and then glanced down her back to see how her liege L. was getting on.

"Stand still, can't you? How d'you suppose I can tell the middle of anything while you're twisting round like a grindstone? Stand up straight. I don't know what—hang the thing!" and he ran the pin into his thumb.

"Oh, dear, I'm so sorry!" said Mrs. Timmins.

"Oh, yes! You're sorry! Why weren't you sorry before I began? What d'you come down here half dressed for? What d'you suppose I am, a broken-backed seamstress. That thumb won't be well for a year and a half. Hang the dress! Don't you know how to pin yourself up yet? You wait here, I'll be back soon; I'm just going for a pile-driver to fasten you together."

"Never mind, dear; it doesn't matter if it isn't pinned."

"Doesn't matter!" howled Mr. Timmins, "doesn't matter! What d'you ask me to pin it for, then? What d'you do it for, just to see me mutilate my thumb? Look here, are you going with me, or going to stand here like an eight-day clock? It's past nine, and you've seven more hours' dressing to do, haven't you?"

"I'm ready, my dear. I'm only waiting for you."

They took a cab, and as they got out, Mrs. Timmins rushed for the pier.

"What's the matter with you now? Can't you see there's plenty of time?" reasoned Mr. Timmins.

She accommodated her steps to his, and in due time they reached the pier with fifteen minutes to spare.

"Another time when I want to go anywhere, Mrs. Timmins, you just be ready the moment I speak. I won't be kept waiting all day for anybody. You hear me, do you?"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Timmins, beginning to realise that she had left her fan, smelling bottle, parasol, veil, and handkerchief at home in her hurry, and had forgotten to close the window in case of rain.

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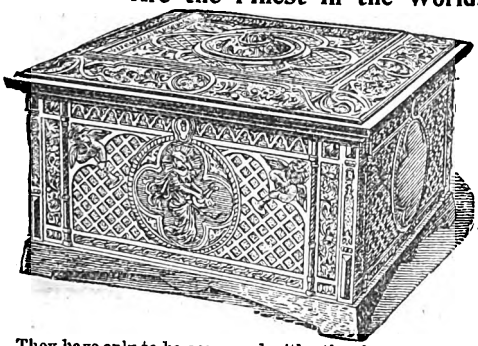
Messrs. Nicole Frères'

Regina and Polyphon Self-Playing Musical Boxes

Are the Finest in the World.



They Play over **1,000** Tunes, and give universal satisfaction.

A Revelation to Lovers of Good Music.

They have only to be compared with other boxes to establish supremacy over all. They have every improvement that ingenuity and skill can conceive, and are wonderfully brilliant and sweet in tone, with strong but very simple mechanism that cannot get out of order. Play music of every description—grave and gay, sacred and secular—and as an entertainer, at home or in public, are without equal.

Boxes of every description, from **16/6** to **100 guineas.**

SPECIAL LINES.

"INFANTA" POLYPHON, with 6 Tunes, £1 12s. Extra Tunes, 5d. each.
"KLEBERG" " " £2 11s. " 8d. "
"GORDON" " " £4 5s. " 1/4 "
"EUGENE" " " £8 10s. " 2/6 "
The "HAVELOCK" POLYPHON (56 Notes), in fine Walnut Case, with Marquetrie Lid, and 24 Tunes, £5 5s.
The No. 19 REGINA, 112 Steel Tongues, richly carved Walnut Case, and 24 Tunes, £12.

ALL DEALERS: Inspection Invited at Show Rooms, or write direct for FREE No. 3 Catalogue.

NICOLE FRÈRES LTD. (Dept. 3),
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COMFORT, CLEANLINESS AND CURE

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Gives ease at once and effectually removes Piles, Cracks, Fissures and Ulcerations. In boxes 1/- & 2/6 each. Post free 1/2 & 2/9

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HAND ORGANS from 20s.

Made in 3 sizes, in Ebony and Gold Case. Full organ tone. Can play Songs, Hymns, or Dance Music. Sent on receipt of P.O. 5s.; balance 5s. monthly. Send for List of Tunes and Catalogue.

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SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

GIVEN AWAY

HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A £5 HOUSE

LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.

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Send ½ stumps for Sample to 13 Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

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THERE IS NO BETTER REMEDY IN THE WHOLE WORLD FOR ALL COUCH AND THROAT TROUBLES THAN KEATING'S LOZENGES. ONE GIVES RELIEF. THEY WILL CURE, AND THEY WILL NOT INJURE YOUR HEALTH. THEY CONTAIN ONLY THE PUREST DRUGS.

Sold everywhere in 1/1½ Tins.

NOSE MACHINES as worn by Nobility. Shape altered permanently by few weeks' wear, from 9/9 each. Red Nose Cure, Medically Approved, 3/9. Pamphlet, "Cause and Prevention," 1/-; particulars for stamp. Mention Paper.
LEES RAY, Specialist, South Castle St., Liverpool.

£20 Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, or Varicose Veins, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free.

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NEURALGIA

Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

Do not be persuaded to take a substitute, there is nothing as good as **ZOX.**

Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 HATTON GARDEN, E.C.

THE ELECTROPATHIC BELT

WILL PROLONG LIFE!

Rev. W. Smith, of Zion House, Kirton-in-Lindsey, writes:—"*I had a severe illness, accompanied with bronchitis; my voice was quite gone, when a friend brought me one of your Electropathic Appliances. I was soon restored to health and strength. I have recommended your appliances to many of my friends, and have never known them to fail in* giving relief and prolonging life."

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Stop physicing and send for the Electropathic Belt, and obtain relief. Pamphlet and Book of Testimonials **POST FREE.**

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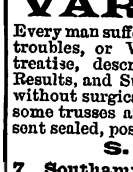

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

MISS HEYWOOD, 77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, Lancs., says: "I am 21lb. lighter, and my rheumatism also seems cured."

MRS. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Station Road, Ross, Hereford, says: "Am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st."

MR. CANHAM, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned."

LADY CONSTANCE CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with the Tablets."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Laudsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent Tablets directly."

COUNTESS G. FURSTENBERG, Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone."

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

PIANOS. **UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.**

Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 23 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. **GENUINE AMERICAN.**

Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers, 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

THE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL PIANOFORTE CO., Granby St. & Selborne St., LIVERPOOL.

Agents wanted where not represented.

I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

H. T., having heard that there are a large number of coal and iron mines in Spain, asks me to tell him the respective numbers.———There are 1,027 iron mines and 461 coal mines.

J. YOUNG thinks that boys are not so fond of the sea as they used to be. At one time, youngsters were always threatening to run away when they couldn't do as they liked at home, but one does not hear this so often now.———There may be some foundation for the statement, but the applications for admission to the Navy do not confirm your opinion that British boys are losing their love for the career of a sailor. There were 4,600 applications last year, although the height and chest measurement have been increased.

B. S.—You mean the baya bird of India. This bird has the curious habit of fastening fireflies to its nest with moist clay; at night such a nest looks like an electric street lamp.

F.—Foolscap paper was so named from the fact that the first that was made bore the mark of a jester in cap and bells. The mark has long since disappeared, but the name remains as the indication of a certain size of paper.

A. M.—The inhabitants of Sydney, New South Wales, seem to be pleasure-loving people. There are about 400,000 persons in Sydney, and to gratify their desire for amusement they have eight theatres and the same number of music halls. Outdoor sports are very popular, yachting being in high favour.

G. K.—Peach stones are readily sold in New York, where they are bought up by merchants, who obtain perfume, flavouring essence, and prussic acid from the kernels.

P. L.—The pulse of the average healthy human being varies greatly in different parts of the globe, according to the temperature, barometric pressure, the height of the individual and other conditions. The rate for the average man in this country is 72 beats a minute. The Teutonic races, being taller, have a slower pulse; the rate for the Andaman Islanders, probably the smallest people on the earth, is 40. A savant who climbed Mount Blanc found that his pulse at that elevation recorded 120, whereas the normal figure was 60. In the tropics the pulse has been known to rise to 140.

WHEAT.—Wheat from Chili and Argentina reaches us long before our own crop is ready, for the simple reason that in those countries it ripens in January. In Peru this cereal is ready for cutting in November.

G. N.—In no country in the world are infectious diseases so fatal as in Russia, and this is especially true in regard to children. Measles, scarlatina, diphtheria, and small-pox carry off large numbers of infants every year. Official figures show that more than a million and a half children and adults die every year from infectious diseases, and there is every reason to believe that most of these might be saved if proper precautions were taken.

R. O.—The "Oratory of Gallerus" is a remarkable structure at Dingle, in County Kerry, Ireland. Who Gallerus was, and the exact date of the erection of this edifice, history does not tell us; all we know is that it is a relic of the early days of Christianity in Ireland and that it has existed for more than 1,000 years.

D. M.—In the city of Mexico the natives act as beasts of burden; they carry tremendous weights on their backs for miles, and charge very moderately. Occasionally they drag a kind of cart with enormous wheels. In the surrounding country, mules are used; you can see droves of them come into town in the morning, laden with farm produce.

A. G.—It is estimated that there are now 200,000,000 Bibles, in different languages, in the world. This estimate is arrived at, after making due allowance for those that have been destroyed or have disappeared in some way or other.

S. M.—The art of starching linen was introduced into England by a native of Flanders in 1553.

STOTTER.—A German physician has invented a new treatment for stutterers. He says that the cause of this distressing affliction is a rush of consonant sounds to the vocal apparatus and the consequent exclusion of the vowels. He makes his patients utter words and sentences in which the long vowel sounds predominate, and after a few lessons there is a great improvement.

WHITE asks why the White House at Washington is so called.———Because it was painted white to hide the marks of the smoke and other traces of the onslaught by the British in their war with the States. It was partly destroyed on that occasion, and when it was restored, the whole was painted white. It was at first proposed to call it the "Palace," but the idea was rejected, and it was known as "Executive Mansion," until its coat of paint gained for it the present designation.

L. E.—Kissing the hand of great men was the common custom in ancient Greece. This token of homage and admiration is with us confined to the kissing of ladies' hands by gentlemen.

A. D.—The Spanish have the most polite form of address. To those whom they do not know, or with whom they are but slightly acquainted, they say not "you," but "your Grace." The butcher will ask: "Does your Grace want a leg of mutton, madam?" At the end of a letter—even a business communication — they write the initials of words that signify "who kisses your hand."

E. D.—Norway is the country you mean. In Norway the idea of equality among the different classes is very strong; the driver of a conveyance considers himself every bit as good as his fare, and many of the peasants have coats-of-arms. They are so proud that it is looked upon as derogatory to accept alms. It is therefore a lucky thing that there is but little poverty in the country.

T. A.—The man who can claim to have the most tattoo marks on his body is Professor Frank Howard, an American citizen. He is decorated with 780 designs in red, blue, and black, and the materials used in the colouring included soot, charcoal, brickdust, Indian ink and Prussian blue. It took 154 days to tattoo him all over.

W. G. asks: "Is there any plant or vegetable that will give you an electric shock?"———Yes; there is a plant called the *phytolacca electrica*, growing in hot climates, which will give you a shock that will make you sit up. Animals, birds, and insects all shun it. If a magnetic needle be placed within six yards of the plant it will be sensibly affected. It has been noticed that the energy of the plant increases during the day time.

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RHEUMATISM, SCIATICA, LUMBAGO, INFLUENZA, LIVER AND KIDNEY COMPLAINTS, SKIN ERUPTIONS, AFFECTIONS OF THE THROAT, CHEST AND LUNGS.

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WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER.

ENORMOUS PRIZE SCHEME

Distribution during the Three Months ending March 31st, 1899, of

12,000 Or more, Handsome Prizes, Value over **£5,000**

The principal **JANUARY WINNERS** will be published as early as possible in the February Newspapers and Journals.

LIST OF PRIZES TO BE COMPETED FOR EACH MONTH.

COLLECT YOUR WRAPPERS.

1	Cash Prize of £100	£100	0	0	400	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 5s. ea.	£100	0	0
4	Cash Prizes of £25...	100	0	0	2,000	Boxes of our famous "Nubolic Soap," packed in fancy boxes containing 18 12-oz. Tablets, value 4s. box...	400	0	0
8	Cash Prizes of £12 10s.	100	0	0					
16	Cash Prizes of £6 5s.	100	0	0					
20	Sewing Machines, value £5 each.	100	0	0	1,000	Pictures of the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade," in gilt frame, value 4s. each	200	0	0
33	Cash Prizes of £3 each	99	0	0					
100	Cash Prizes of £1 each	100	0	0					
200	Cash Prizes of 10s. each	100	0	0					
200	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 10s. ea.	100	0	0					
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COLLECT YOUR WRAPPERS.

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

Cut off the top portion of wrapper, with the words **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and send, postage or carriage paid, to **Joseph Watson and Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than either February 28th or March 31st. Wrappers arriving after April 1st will be valueless. Be careful to see that the full postage is paid, any parcel arriving postage or carriage not being paid, will be refused. **The Prizes** will be awarded in above order **to the senders of the highest number of wrappers.** The wrappers must be in bundles of 50, and each parcel must contain the full name and address of sender, and the number of wrappers sent must be marked on the same paper. The packages must be marked on the outside, **"Prize Competition."**

SPECIALLY NOTE.—**Wrappers of unsuccessful competitors will be added to those sent in by them in the following month.** A list giving result of competition will be enclosed with each prize, when it is sent out. All possible speed in counting the wrappers will be made, and **Joseph Watson and Sons Limited** hope they will be able to dispatch all prizes not later than the 21st day of the month following the competition. The decision of Joseph Watson and Sons Limited to be final. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson and Sons Limited will be eligible.

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FREE FROM ACID POISON OR GRIT
"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.
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Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.
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M. A. P. THE BEST SOCIETY PAPER. EVERY WEEK, 1d.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 529. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 18TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

A Weak Stomach.

This is probably the most prevalent Disorder under the sun. Women especially have Weak Digestions.

A Weak Stomach means a weak Frame, weak Nerves, and weak Energies, because only incomplete nutrition takes place.

Weak Stomachs can be gradually made strong by the use of Guy's Tonic, which exerts a corrective, curative, and tonic influence in a variety of ways.

Guy's Tonic promotes Digestion by furnishing in itself a portion of digestive fluid. It also stimulates the natural flow of the gastric juice by which Stomachic Digestion is performed, and it further restores tone and tension to the mucous Membrane of the Stomach itself.

The heavy weight at the pit of the Stomach, with a bearing-down pain, the darting pain under the Shoulder-blades, the furred Tongue, unpleasant breath, Acidity and Heartburn, all indicate clearly enough that Digestion is at fault, and needs correction and help. By taking Guy's Tonic an aid to the Digestion of what you eat is at once supplied, and the food is therefore eaten, digested, and assimilated with greater ease and comfort.

This improvement continues day by day until enjoyment in eating returns, while a sharp Appetite at regular intervals indicates clearly enough the restorative power that Guy's Tonic has so well exerted. In every phase of Stomachic Disorder Guy's Tonic is recommended as always doing good.

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This is a favourite "Alfosco" Costume, made in the Spécialité Serge, all colours. The bodice is shaped to the figure, and has a pleated front, and trimmed with a frill of cloth carried over the shoulders, and pretty fancy buttons. The bodice and sleeves are lined. The Skirt is cut full and fashionably. Costume complete, **10/6**. Carr. 6d. Skirt alone, **5/6**. Carr. 5d. extra.

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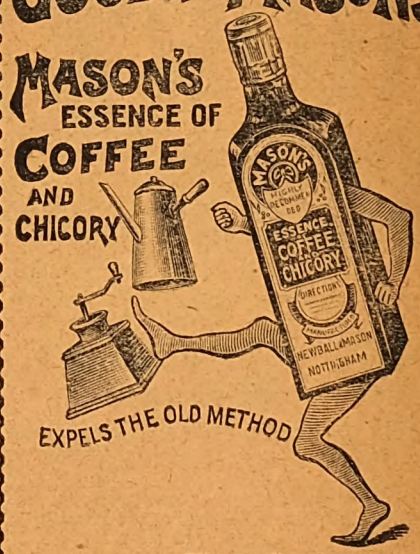

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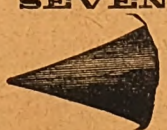

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SHORT STORIES

No. 529.
One Penny.

For the Week ending
February 18th, 1899.

A TRAMP FOR A WIFE.

I HAD this story from a dear friend who told it to me one day when we were talking of the accidents of life—more astonishing and romantic a hundred times than the inventions of fiction. He had seen this little drama enacted under his eyes, and had known the actors in it.

"My father lived in High Street. I can still see his house with its slate roof and its jutting beams, a hospitable house if ever there was one. Poor people know how good it was to stay there; they never went away empty-handed.

"We were seated one evening by the fireside, my father smoking his pipe and gazing into the sparkling ashes on the hearth, my mother ironing the family linen, I reading, when suddenly outside, near the street door, a great noise was heard, and we saw a lad with a face of terror, enter hurriedly.

"'What is the matter?'

"'A soldier has fallen at your door—overcome by fatigue,' answered the lad.

"My father loved soldiers. He sprang from his seat and rushed out of doors, and before I had taken half a dozen steps to follow him he was returning with a young soldier so well supported that my father was carrying him like a sack of corn.

"My mother hastened to wheel a big armchair near to the fire, and the young man was assisted to sit down in it or rather he was laid down in it and my father, looking at him pitifully, said:

"'Is it possible you can be tramping the roads in such a condition?'

"The young soldier was indeed very pale and thin, his hair glued to his forehead with perspiration, the veins on his temples swollen, his face begrimed with the dust of the highway.

Edited
By
C. Arthur Pearson

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"He must have had a long walk; his shoes were worn out, the leather cut to pieces with sharp stones as we could see. The upper leather of the left shoe had been torn from the sole and the foot within was bleeding.

"My father was on his knees before the poor fellow, pulling, cutting, tearing off the fragments of the boots. The young soldier's feet were terribly swollen and blistered. My father dipped his handkerchief in vinegar, washed and dressed the wounds.

"The soldier had by this time come to himself. He looked at us—at my father, mother, me, and two or three neighbours who had by that time arrived. We could see that he was trying to comprehend what was taking place about him.

"Then he raised himself, resting on the arm of the chair, and said to my father in broken accents:

"'But, monsieur—you—you—do not know me!'

"'We'll make each other's acquaintance at table, then,' said my father smiling.

"We had already dined but my father wished to keep the soldier company. He placed himself at the table facing the young man, and examined the regimental buttons of his tunic. The soldier ate with great appetite, helped by my mother, my father filling the glasses which did not rest long empty.

"'So,' he said suddenly pointing to the tin tube box which hung suspended by a cord to the young soldier's neck, 'you have served your time since you have got your discharge. But what in the name of misfortune are you doing—trying to kill yourself on the roads? I see how it is—you haven't any money to pay for a place on the coach?'

"'I,' said the soldier, 'I have been paid my discharge money and my mother would have sent me more than enough to pay my fare if I had wanted it; but—well I couldn't ride.'

"'I understand,' replied my father, who did not in the least comprehend the meaning of what the soldier had said. He called for another bottle.

"The meal ended, the soldier tried to walk; but he staggered on his feet, uttered a stifled cry and fell back into the chair. I saw tears start to his eyes. He was a young man, thin, wiry, dark-complexioned and nervous, with a look of energy in his face—not a man to weep at trifles. Those tears in his eyes puzzled me.

"'I shall not be able to walk before to-morrow!' he cried in a tone in which anger was mixed with mortification.

"'Walk!' exclaimed my mother in alarm.

"'Continue your tramp!' cried my father.

The soldier shook his head.

"'You do not know,' he said, 'I must do it!'

"I saw my father look intently into the young man's face, with a dumb, questioning gaze.

"'I'll tell you all about it,' said the soldier, 'for you have perhaps saved my life, and I owe it to you to tell you who I am.

"'My name is Jean Chevaucheux and my father is a lathe-splitter at Mezieres—an honest man resembling you, monsieur. Seven years ago, when I was drawn for the conscription, I was wildly in love with Marguerite Servan—a girl as good as she was pretty. I had already asked for her hand and her father had not said me nay; but at the same time as myself Pierre Puvioux had asked to be her husband.

"'Pierre is about my own age, a good fellow who carries his heart in his hand, as the saying is. I ought to have detested him, but he remained my friend. Judge for yourself!

"'Old Servan held out his hand to me, and said:

"'"You are worthy to become my son-in-law; but you must get Marguerite's consent."

"'When the question was put to her, Marguerite said she would willingly have me for her husband; but she said exactly the same in regard to Puvioux. She loved one as well as the other and could not decide which of us to select.

"'One evening Servan took Pierre and myself by the arm and led us to a public-house, and then said while we emptied a bottle of Moselle:

"'"My lads, you are a pair of worthy fellows, equal in merit, and I love you with all my heart. One of you shall be my son-in-law—that's a bargain. For that Marguerite will wait seven years. She has no preference either for you, Puvioux, or for you, Chevaucheux; but she loves both of you and will make happy which ever of you Fate shall select for her. This, then, is the condition on which one of you is to marry my daughter. You will go away on the same day, and it is probable that you will come back on the same day; well, which ever of you is first to shake hands with me, and say to him, 'Holloa! here I am—I've served my time!' I swear he shall be the husband of Marguerite!"

"'Truly there are odd accidents in life,' Jean Chevaucheux went on. 'Quitting our native place at the same hour, we were, Pierre and I, put into the same regiment. At first I was annoyed at that. I would rather have had him at a distance for, as you may easily imagine, I could not feel very friendly towards him. But I reflected; having him near me I should at least be able to talk of Marguerite, and that would be a consolation. Then I said to myself; "Seven years! After all, that will not kill me!"

"'In the regiment I became fast friends with Pierre Puvioux—a good fellow, a bar of gold! We often talked of the native peace, of old Servan, and of Marguerite—as a way of killing time, you understand. We frequently wrote to Mezieres, each confiding to the other what he had said in his letter. It was a struggle, of course, but it was carried on loyally. When Marguerite or Servan answered, the answer was addressed to both of us, wishing us equally good luck, giving to each of us an equal dose of hope. So you may be sure we went on hoping.

"'The seven years came to an end. I do not need to tell you my story day by day—our discharge and return route papers, all properly signed, were handed to us.

"'"Well," I said to Puvioux, "at last our time is up; we must set off for home."

"'"Yes," he replied; "they are waiting for our return there."

"'"You know," I said, "that the game will not be finally won before we both get back to Mezieres and the one of us who loses declares that the struggle has been fairly carried through."

"'"All right," cried Puvioux.

"'We shook hands and one morning—the other day—with good shoes on our feet and a stout stick in hand we set off for Mezieres.

"'We set off in company, talking little, thinking much and walking more. It was terribly hot, frightfully dusty, the air as heavy as lead. Half way through one of my daily tramps I threw myself down by the roadside unable to go any farther, my legs stiffened and worn out with fatigue.

"'"Are you going to rest there?" asked Puvioux.

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"'"Yes," I replied.

"'"Good-bye, then," he said, going on.

"'I watched him out of sight walking with a firm step, as if he had only just commenced the journey. When he passed round the bend in the road and I could no longer see him—left alone, as it were, abandoned—a feeling of overwhelming despair came upon me; I made an effort. I rose and continued the march; the rest, short as it was, did me good and put fresh courage into me. I pressed on, on, on, and made such progress that after a while I came up with Puvioux and passed him.

"'But by the close of the day, though I had got well in front of my antagonist, I was done up. I went into an inn and lay down, intending to sleep a little—ah, a little! I slept through the whole night! I awoke only at daybreak, and then I was furious. I called out:

"'"Have any of you seen a soldier on foot go by?"

"'"A soldier? Yes, monsieur—very late last night. He asked for a glass of water."

"'Ah! in turn he had passed me.

"'I hurriedly set off. At three o'clock in the afternoon I had not come up with Puvioux—nor at six o'clock. In the evening I took a rest while eating. The meal finished, on I went again. This time Puvioux should not be much ahead of me! I walked on late into the night, but there is a limit to a man's strength; once more I was obliged to halt.

"'I knocked at the door of a roadside public-house and was admitted. Puvioux was there, seated in an arm-chair, pale as death. He started with irritation on seeing me—not unnaturally. We did not say much to each other; what, indeed, had we to talk about? Then too, we were so horribly tired.

"'It was who should rise earliest next morning—and it was I—and that morning was this morning. All day I have been walking, resting from time to time, but very little; for you know we are near the end. This village is near the end of the tramp from Angers to Mezieres. I know my map of France now!

"'The last tramp—Oh! If I should arrive too late!'

"My father advised the soldier to go to bed at once, and the poor fellow desired nothing better. The bed was ready. Chevaucheux shook us all by the hand and went to the room which had been made ready for him.

"Next day before dawn my father, already up, looked out of the window to see what weather it was. While he was looking up at the sky he heard, down in the street below, the sound of heavy footsteps, and in the uncertain light dimly made out the form of a soldier painfully making his way towards Mezieres.

"'Already *en route?*' asked my father.

"The soldier halted.

"'Well,' continued my father 'are you off?'

"The soldier raised his head and tried to make out who it was who was speaking to him.

"'Are you Jean Chevaucheux?' asked my father.

"'No,' answered the soldier; 'I am Pierre Puvioux.'

"And, as if the name of Jean Chevaucheux acted upon him like a spur he went on his way with increased speed and quickly passed out of my father's sight.

"'Halloa!' said my father; 'poor Chevaucheux will have to bestir himself if he wants to outstrip that sturdy young fellow!' and he went at once to the room in which Jean had been resting.

"The young soldier was already up. He was examining his feet by the light of a candle.

"'Victory!' he cried, on seeing my father. 'I am fresh and vigorous. I am out of pain. *En route!*'

"'And quickly!' replied my father. 'Puvioux has just passed through the street.'

"'Pierre Puvioux?'

"'Yes; I have just spoken with him. He passed under my windows, and is pushing forward like a madman.'

* * * * *

"For three or four years we had no news of Jean Chevaucheux; but we often spoke of that evening when the young soldier entered, bleeding and exhausted, into my father's house. What had become of him? How had ended that love romance so strangely begun?

"One day my father had to go to Mezieres on business, and he took me with him.

"At Mezieres he entered the first barber shop he came to, to get shaved. At the door of the shop was seated an infant, enjoying the sunshine, but at the same time blocking the way with his plump outspread legs.

"'Won't you let me pass?' asked my father, pleasantly.

"'No, I won't let zu pass,' cried the child.

"At that moment a man in his shirt sleeves appeared in the shop—the father—and taking the young gentleman up in his arms, removed him out of the way, saying as he did so:

"'What are you about, Pierre? Do you want to drive away the customers?'

"I recognised the voice. So did my father.

"We looked at the barber, and he looked at us; and suddenly, my father, and I uttered a simultaneous exclamation. The barber was Jean Chevaucheux. He instantly held out his hand. He was flushed and his face beaming.

"'Is it indeed you? Ah, when I think that I have never written to you—how ungrateful I must seem! Have you never heard? It was I who won the bride! I arrived first—first, you know!'

"And rushing to the back of the shop he called:

"'Marguerite! Marguerite! come quickly!'

"He appeared to be out of his wits with joy.

"A young woman appeared, pretty, fair-complexioned with blue eyes; her air gentle, pensive, a little sad even.

"'You see this—this gentleman?' he cried. 'Well, it was he who saved me, the night before I arrived at your father's—of whom I have spoken so often—Monsieur Decary!'

"'Ah!' cried Marguerite, with a sweet smile.

"And, turning upon us her large, calm eyes, she bowed and thanked us gently. Then, as her husband continued to call up the past she looked at him beseechingly, even a little reproachfully.

"But Jean did not see this.

"'Ah!' he cried, 'and it is to you, monsieur, I owe my happiness! My son—my little Pierre—look at him It was by my wife's wish that he was named Pierre—isn't he a fine fellow? My shop, which is going on as well as possible, my wife whom I worship, and my little Pierre I owe all to you!'"

R. Wilson.

An editor of a Western paper says that he has three times put on a clean shirt for the purpose of calling on the Mayor of his town, but did not see him, and concludes an account of his disappointments with the following:

"His worship is respectfully informed that we cannot afford to make another such run on our linen, and if we have the honour of making his acquaintance, he will have no reason to complain if we are not altogether in trim."

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The Armoured Train.

It was a risky task, and the chances were one in a hundred of making a success of it; but nobody stopped to think of that, for the game was well worth the candle, and there was enough excitement to satisfy the most adventurous and daring spirit among us.

The following were Major Leoncio Vidal's plans:

We were to set out at daybreak on the following morning, ride down to the Camajuani Railroad, block the morning train with its load of *guardia-civiles*, compel them to surrender, dress ourselves in their uniforms, enter the town by the train, disguised in that manner, burn it, and then beat a retreat.

All this was to take place in broad daylight, with only thirty men at our disposal, and on the sixteenth day of March, in the year eighteen hundred and ninety-six.

Fun enough, we all thought, and that night, as we sat round our camp-fires, the woods resounded with the voices of our little band, all laughing merrily at the joke we were about to play.

The following morning, at the first note of the "réveillé," the men sprang to their feet, and in a few minutes we were all ready, every one eager for the coming lark.

In a little while we were *en route* for the appointed spot, Major Vidal and I making our number a round thirty, but no one thought of our strength, feeling sure a victory.

Major Vidal was greatly feared by our foes, being a great guerrilla fighter, and as brave a man as ever wore the rebel cockade. He would strike a blow and be miles away, laughing over its success, almost before the drowsy Spaniards awoke to that fact that he had been in their midst.

Before the war he was a resident of Camajuani, a town noted for its loyalty to Spain, and he never lost an opportunity of reminding them of that fact, keeping the inhabitants in a constant state of terror by frequently dashing into the town or firing on the forts—"keeping up his circle of acquaintances," as he called it.

The men looked fighters, every inch of them, dressed in their rough duck suits, and with their broad panama hats thrown back off the forehead; even the horses—faithful little friends—many of which bore the scars of former escapades, looked eager for work as they rattled their bits, wondering where we were going and impatient to arrive.

It was one of those mornings which can never be forgotten. Overhead was the beautiful clear blue sky of the tropics, the air was cool and full of the perfume of wild flowers, and the birds chirped merrily to one another from the branches above—a morning which makes one's thoughts fly back to home and peace, and causes a sigh to escape from the lips as one awakes to the stern reality of war.

Vidal and I rode next to each other at the head of our men, he giving me his orders for the day's work.

"What's that tin can doing there strapped to your saddle?" I asked, noticing a long cylindrical affair hanging by the side of his leg.

"That," he answered, with a broad grin, "is a secret. You will learn its use soon enough."

A short time afterwards we arrived at the line; the troop dismounted, tied their horses to trees and formed, awaiting orders.

I looked at my watch; half-past five. Our train was not due before eleven o'clock, so we had plenty of time in which to do the work carefully.

Vidal had chosen a spot which, if made to order, would not have suited our purpose better. On one side of the railway rose a high embankment, while on the other the earth lay smooth and bare as a billiard-table. Fifty yards further up, the line curved sharply round a wood, which would screen us from view until it was too late for the engine-driver to avoid the trap. Away in the distance loomed the church steeple of Camajuani, from the cross of which floated Spain's flag.

Sentinels were posted some distance apart on both sides of the line, and the men rapidly set to work loosening nails and heaping obstructions upon the metals.

Let me describe for the benefit of the reader what an armoured Spanish train means.

A few months previous to the time of which I write General Gomez had issued a proclamation stating that he forbade traffic of any kind upon the railway, and that fifteen days after date disobedience of orders would be at the risk of life.

The Spanish Government pooh-poohed the idea, but saw fit, however, to take their precautions, which they did in the following manner. An accident, such as being blown up by a dynamite bomb, could not, of course, be avoided, and they decided to fortify the trains so as to make their capture a thing almost impossible—by placing behind the engine a carriage full of soldiers, thoroughly equipped to do battle with a regiment.

The four sides of the carriage were covered with steel plates punctured by diamond-shaped loop-holes, but, in their sagacity, or probably not deeming it necessary, the Spaniards forgot to cover the *roof* in a like manner.

This was their only vulnerable point, but one of which we meant to take advantage, the blockade being so placed as to bring the protected carriage directly underneath the embankment from which we intended to fire.

At eight o'clock the work was finished, and the order was given to prepare breakfast.

Now, a morning's ride and work like that which we had done would sharpen the appetite of any man, and I felt in a condition to do justice to the most doubtful morsel.

When I had finished I walked over and joined Vidal, who still lingered over his frugal breakfast.

"We ought to make a success of this job," he said, looking with a suspicious eye upon a "shady" morsel. "Those beggars will not see the block until it is too late to stop."

"But," I exclaimed, accepting and lighting a cigarette, "suppose they run their engine into that block? It will jump the metals, and then we shall not be able to enter Camajuani as you intend."

"Why, that stuff would never cause the engine to jump the rail. Of course, the driver will see it the minute he comes round the curve, and he will reverse the engine. The obstacle will only serve to bring the train to a complete stop. What we must do is to fire as accurately as possible through the roof and blow the the scoundrels out of the carriage if they don't surrender. The rest is mere child's play."

I didn't quite see where the "child's play" came in, but of course I refrained from saying so.

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"That train is due in twenty minutes," he said, later, glancing at his watch, "so you had better call in the sentinels and post the men."

I turned to obey his orders, noticing as I did so, that he took a long fuse out of his pocket, and I wondered where he had obtained the dynamite, and why he had not mentioned its acquisition to me.

The work had been well done. Enough rubbish was piled on the track to hinder the progress of the engine without causing a derailment, while further back several nails were loosened, to enable us to remove a rail after the train had passed, and in that manner prevent it from shunting out of the trap.

The sentries were soon collected, each man allotted his position, ordered to lie flat on the ground, and when the signal to fire was given to blaze away at the top of the carriage.

By this time "Old Sol" was getting almost unendurable, the back of my neck feeling anything but pleasant, and I mentally blessed the tradition which makes all trains late as the hands of my watch marked eleven and no signs of the train could be seen.

Suddenly the puffing of the locomotive could be heard in the distance, and we knew that the train would soon arrive. Laughter and jests ceased as if by magic—death was in the air.

Now the roar of the wheels could be heard tearing along; another second, and round the curve swung the engine.

In an instant the driver saw his peril and reversed the engine; too late, however, to avoid dashing half-way through the heap, where the engine stuck and the train came to a stop, with the armoured carriage directly beneath us.

"*Diablo!* what's the matter?" shouted a voice from the rear door, followed by a head imprudently stuck through the opening.

The questioner never found out, for a well-aimed bullet killed him. That shot had been the signal, and the men poured their fire through the roof of the car, to the disgust and rage of the Spaniards, who now found the tables turned, being shot down without seeing or firing upon their assailants.

Never had I felt so queer under fire. Here we were pumping lead into a pack of howling, panic-stricken men, while we ran comparatively no danger.

One of our men, carried away by the ludicrous situation, jumped down on the carriage, and in a second lay prone upon his face, pierced by innumerable bullets. He paid dearly for his foolhardiness.

A few moments later the man by my side was wounded, and after placing him in a safe position I returned to my post.

Hardly had I done so when I noticed Vidal making for the top of the bank with the tin cylinder in his hand, leaving in his wake a thin streak of smoke, caused by the fuse which he had lighted.

"This is adding insult to injury," I thought, as I watched him crawl down the embankment; but I consoled myself with the idea that they would have done the same to us, and I proceeded to watch the major.

On reaching the line he drew from his pocket a handkerchief, and holding it above his head, shouted:

"Hey! you men there, stop your firing! I wish to negotiate a small loan which will not inconvenience you in the least."

I repeated the same order to our men, who ceased firing, and were now watching their leader. A strange sight, to be sure, as he stood there, armed from head to foot, holding in one hand the flag of truce, while in the other he carried the bomb, with its spluttering and sizzling fuse.

Out of the door came a pale, horror-stricken face, with eyes that blinked incessantly as they peered through the smoke; a little red line down his chest showed where he had been hit, and I pitied him, as I watched him stand there, waiting for Vidal to speak.

"Now, look here," said the latter, in his commanding manner, "you are all in a pretty bad stew in there"—here the man worked his mouth into a smile which was positively painful to behold—"and I feel for you all. So, after consulting with my captain"—pointing at me, which gesture I acknowledged by saluting the officer, who returned it in a very dignified manner—"I have determined, provided you surrender, to free you all upon the following conditions:

"First, that you pass out all your guns; second, that you exchange your uniforms for ours; and third, that you take up the positions which we now hold."

"And if we refuse, señor, what will happen?" replied the lieutenant, for such he was.

"Why, you will not be in a condition to regret it fifteen minutes later," answered Vidal, as he placed the bomb directly underneath the carriage.

"Here, put that thing out!" cried the Spaniard. "I will agree to your terms. It means dishonour and death to me, but I will do it for the sake of my men."

"It is a soldier's duty to die," replied Vidal, sarcastically. "Make haste," he continued, "for that match won't last all day."

And quick work they made of it, for in ten minutes we stood dressed in the Spanish uniforms, and a pile of arms lay on the ground.

By this time someone had hauled the driver and fireman from beneath the carriage and ordered them to start the train. Placing our prisoners on the embankment, we tipped our hats, and, with farewell words of consolation and advice to them, we started on our way to Camajuani, happy at the success of our venture.

But we shouted too soon, for hardly had we gone a mile when we saw coming towards the line a large body of infantry and cavalry, and we knew that the game was up.

For a moment Vidal thought of attempting to pass as friends, but the risk was too great, the enemy outnumbering us by ten to one; so the train was stopped and the order to retreat given.

The Spaniards saw us, and in another moment the bullets commenced to drop in our midst. It is hard enough work for a cavalryman to run, especially loaded down with the accroutrements of two men, as the majority of us were. I mourned the absence of my little horse, and as I jumped fences and cleared ditches I wondered if André had had sense enough to place him in a safe spot.

Fortunately, the enemy did not pursue us, and after a mile or so we were all brought up breathless in a sheltering wood.

We had lost two men and had three wounded—small pay for such a rich capture of arms and ammunition as we had made.

"Where is that can?" shouted Vidal, after he had recovered enough breath to be able to speak.

No one replied.

"Confound it all!" he continued, "that thing held my only pair of extra trousers; and here I am, dressed in this uniform, with the bright prospect of going through all the war in it."

Cyril Humphrey.

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A REVOLT.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

THE forest was awake, and the light mist that floats in the morning air began to shimmer into silvery flakes under the sultry rays of the August sun.

"It is going to be a lovely day," said an early-rising Daisy as she lifted her dainty little head from out a tuft of grass. She drew a long breath, filling her lungs with the balmy air, and stretched her tender green stem, after having bathed in the life-giving dew of the morning.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed an old white-headed Nettle that lived a few steps off under a grand old oak, and had observed with a grave, experienced eye the morning toilet of her neighbour. "More plans for conquest, my dear Daisy? I fancy that our good friend Buttercup won't be a bachelor much longer judging from the style you are carrying on, you little coquette!"

"Oh, is that you, Granny Nettle? Good morning to you!" and young Miss Daisy bent her delicate head in respectful salutation to Mother Nettle, whom everybody loved and venerated because she always gave such good, sensible advice.

Just then an old thistle, who had fixed his abode between the great stones which made a sort of fortress for him, uttered an exclamation of joyous surprise. Having glanced at his feet on waking up, he had perceived that a family of Violets, to whom he had offered his hospitality, and whom he protected by his influence had been increased by some pretty little ones, who smiled up at him with their sweet amethyst eyes.

During all this the handsome Buttercup had been strolling about with his sweetheart Daisy and flirting lovingly, while a foppish Wood-lily was holding an animated conversation with a Sweetbriar, that blushed with pleasure and bent over him to hear the better his honeyed compliments.

A couple of wild Strawberries lived modestly, a little retired, and watched affectionately the gambols of their numerous and restless offspring, who pushed their noses into everything, as children will do.

"Look out! Look out, my friends!" suddenly cried a young Grasshopper, approaching with hurried bounds. "Another picnic party is coming, like the one that killed so many of you last month; let us form some plan of defence, and not submit to be slaughtered by these human beings without pity or remorse."

This terrible news affrighted all the little groups of flowers, and each one fell to lamenting the hard fate that was impending.

"No! no!" cried the little Daisy, struggling from the arms of the Buttercup, who was trying to kiss her. "I will not submit to be murdered like my sisters—to have my petals torn out one by one to that monotonous litany, 'He loves me! a little—much, dearly—passionately—not at all;' when, unfortunately, the 'not at all' falls on my last leaf, and they throw away my poor mutilated body, and trample furiously upon it to wreak their vengeance. Vengeance for what?—because for the most part I tell them the truth, and should be worshipped as an oracle, instead of slain like a traitor. Let us defend ourselves! War to mankind!"

"For once Daisy is right," said the Nettle. "Look at my case! Do you think that I like to know beforehand that I'm going to be stewed to make a cooling draught for sick people? That has been the fate of all my race for centuries. Vengeance is my cry; I'll show these savages that I can sting!"

"Right," said the Thistle. "I'm with you, and this very moment I will sharpen my thorns to pierce the invaders."

"No murder, I beg of you," said the Mother Violet. "Rather than see the blood of my friends and fellow-citizens flow, I will die myself, with my children. Mr. Thistle, you who are so good, and have so generously given us an asylum in your castle, do not expose yourself to ruin. These people are more powerful than we. Hide yourself under yon great rocks and you will pass unnoticed and escape being torn from our affection and gratitude." And she gazed at him with her great blue, supplicating eyes.

The Thistle, under his rude exterior, had a tender and generous heart, and was deeply moved by this proof of friendship; but he was far too loyal and brave to desert his comrades, and basely seek safety in ignominious concealment; so he insisted on Madam Violet and her daughters taking refuge beneath his tough and well-armed leaves, and promised to be cautious and prudent.

"As for me," said the Buttercup, who would not show cowardice before the martial eyes of his Daisy, "I shall go and seek a family of Ants that lives in my neighbourhood, and to whom I have been able to do many a good turn. Ants are very ingenious people, and may serve us at our need."

"And I," cried a young Daffodil, who was imprudently leaning over the edge of the pond to admire his own image, "I have only to make a sign to our friends, the Frogs, and the entire nation will help us."

Some wild Vines that climbed about the old oak-tree promised their aid also, which was the more welcome, as it was precisely the shelter of the massive tree and its thick foliage that attracted the merrymakers whose advent was so dreaded.

The Lily had been busy while the others were talking, and a whole army of Wood-ticks were already marshalled for the fight.

Some tardy Bluebells that were just opening their eyes and yawning, offered a hiding-place in their blossoms to a legion of Gnats, who were detailed to fall foul of the enemy immediately the battle should begin.

The doughty Grasshopper went to call forth his brethren, promising to be back in good time to spring upon the foe.

An old Squirrel, who had been listening intently to the proceedings, approached near and volunteered for the defence.

"You shall see," said his furship, "how I propose to help you, for I hate these invaders as much as you do—these barbarians, who catch us and put us in a cage that goes round and round every time we try to move—a treadmill for innocent people—horrible!"

"War! war to the knife!" shouted all.

"Silence!" cried the Nettle. "Everyone to his station; no noise; concentrate your strength, and don't begin the attack till the enemy is settled down to gorge! Then we will teach the savage a lesson; nevermore

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shall they dare to invade our solitude or disturb our peace. No mercy! no quarter! Flowerland expects that everyone this day will do his duty!"

* * * * *

Two big wagonettes drew near. "There's the very place they told me of," exclaimed a voice, "there, at the foot of that great oak, on the borders of the pond. Halt!"

Everybody got out of the vehicles, quickly or slowly, according to age or corpulence. Two footmen in livery betook themselves to laying a tablecloth on the grass, and spreading on it all sorts of delicacies—pastries, terrines of foie gras, roast fowls, delicate pink hams, lobster salad with hard boiled eggs and lettuce, fruit, cakes, to tempt all tastes; wines, from humble claret to royal champagne; even boiling water to make coffee; nothing was neglected.

The sharp woodland air had given everyone an appetite; the company hastened to sit down on the grass, not without some jostling, with peals of laughter and rustling of silks.

"Good gracious!" cried a little dimpled fair one all at once, who had sat down near the Nettle, which began the fray by stinging her on the bare arm, "somebody pull up this horrible weed!"

As if these words had been a preconcerted signal, and before the servants could execute the order, a host of Frogs leapt upon the table with a horrible croaking, followed by an army of Ants, and a cloud of Gnats, which attacked the necks, the eyes, and the faces of the holiday makers, who uttered the most lamentable cries of pain and terror. The Wood-ticks fell upon the servants, who literally disappeared from sight under the mass of insects, and were quite unable to attend to the numerous and agonised commands of their superiors. One gentleman, who had torn off a branch from the oak to disperse the Gnats, was so vehemently pricked by the Thistle, that he ignominiously deserted the fray, and ran for dear life.

Then fell on the devoted heads of the company an avalanche of nuts and acorns that pelted them like a hail-storm.

It was the good old Squirrel who sacrificed his winter store in the cause of his friends.

Now came up the Grasshoppers in myriads to reinforce the rest of the attack. There was a terrible battle.

"Let us fly, let us quit this accursed place," screamed everbody; and they fled, routed, and indefatigably pursued by the swarms of insects, the most timid of which plucked up courage to sting and bite—so true is it that "it is only the first step that costs."

After their escape the fugitives stuffed themselves higgledy-piggledy into the wagonettes, which started at full speed, even the very horses being driven to madness by the stinging of the infuriated Gnats, who could not forbear the battle, even though victors.

A few moments after, the Wild-wood Flowers danced a saraband on the damask table-cloth, while the Squirrel, aided by all his family, stuffed his hole in the oak tree with a plentiful provision for the winter, discussing, as they worked, various delicate cakes and unknown dainties, which the unlucky owners had not had time to touch.

The Ants, always provident, did not neglect the possibilities of the occasion to fill their underground storehouses, and a whole macaroon was pushed, dragged, and rolled patiently into their abode, where there was a general indigestion that night.

The Daisy could not contain herself for joy, and allowed her sweetheart Buttercup to embrace her to his heart's content, which condescension so elated that "gilded youth" that his face shone like the sun with rapture; while, to complete the general happiness, the Thistle proposed that the wedding should be celebrated at once, he himself officiating as parson, and making some very poignant remarks at the conclusion of the ceremony. All drank the happy couple's health and prosperity in foaming brimmers of the captured champagne, which unaccustomed beverage caused most of the company to tangle their stalks in great confusion.

Towards evening the forest-rangers, passing by the battlefield, saw with astonishment the pell-mell confusion in which were scattered silver, china, provisions, hats, umbrellas, and shawls; they gathered them up, and took them to the lodge, to be re-claimed by their owners, little suspecting the terrible battle that had caused all this rich spoil to be left on the field.

As they carried these things off they were greeted by a peal of mocking laughter; they looked round, but did not discover that the laugh proceeded from Buttercup and Daisy, who were in good spirits, naturally.

Nobody ever appeared to claim the abandoned property, and, since that memorable event, not a single picnic has dared to disturb the peace and content of the valiant flowers and the gallant allies.

Fred Lyster.

A WORD TO THE SPORTSMAN.

Perhaps the characteristic which, more than all others, is common to every Anglo-Saxon is his love of sport and adventure. Not only does he spend his leisure at home either as an active participant or as an onlooker at one or other of our national games, but his roving spirit carries him into the furthest and least explored corners of the earth in search of game of another sort in pursuit of which he meets with many stirring adventures and hair-breadth escapes.

It is, however, only the fortunate few who possess the time and the means to indulge their tastes in this direction, and most of us have to content ourselves with reading of these things in expensive books or magazines. This will be so no longer, for each Wednesday in future, every reader of these lines will be able to purchase

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A Weekly Magazine of Sport and Adventure.

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A Magazine of Sport and Adventure.

BOOK III.—CONCERNING THE - - RULE OF KING OLERON.

CHAPTER V.

How Murtagh O'Neill essayed the rôle of Theseus: how war was decided on: and how the Ermans refused to learn a "complete art of war" other than their own.

In the olden days, so the fable runs, there was a vast building in the island of Crete, so full of rooms and winding passages that it was named the Labyrinth. In it was imprisoned the Minotaur, a monster half-bull, half-man. The Minotaur's food was human beings, and to supply this delicacy King Minos levied a yearly tax on the Athenians who were tributary to him. They had to send over seven chosen boys, and the same number of maidens, who were thrust into the Labyrinth as food for the monster. Bitter was the wailing of parents; but their tears were of no avail, till Theseus killed the Minotaur by the aid of Ariadne, Minos' daughter.

In like fashion, Murtagh O'Neill was destined to deliver the Ermans from their Minotaur, and, though there was a woman mixed up in the case also, it was for her sake, and not through her instrumentality, that he did the deed.

And this is how it came about.

The trio of them had departed very sorrowfully to their abode on the Ledge, and discussed the situation most thoroughly until far on into the night, but without hitting upon any definite plan. They all agreed that the human tax was iniquitous, savage, and unworthy of the darkest of the dark ages. But how to evade it they could not decide. There seemed, as far as they could tell, but one possible alternative to prompt payment. The envoys might be sent back empty-handed. But what would be the result? Beyond a doubt, Daji would descend upon Erma in all its martial array, and the point would be argued out *vi et armis*. There would be numbers slain on either side—and, alas! eaten by either side—and in the end, could the gentle Ermans hope to triumph over their hardy, warlike adversaries? Even the sanguine Irishman was obliged to admit that case would be hopeless. Man for man the Dajians were the stronger, and they could put a larger force in the field by two to one. Erma was women-swamped still. The ranks of males, thinned by slaughter in the late war, had not yet been refilled.

No. To start such a war, would only be to make matters far worse than they were at present.

So the three turned sadly into their hammocks, and tried to forget their sorrows in sleep.

Morning came, as it will whether raven grief or gaily plumaged joy is on the wing; and with the dawn the three Europeans got to their feet, heavy-eyed, unrefreshed. They didn't speak to one another, but had their morning meal in stolid silence. Each felt the shame put on his manhood, and dared not trust his tongue.

The village below was already astir. The hum of that human hive reached them over the tree tops. With tacit consent they all took their way down the steep path, and then along the stream's side. The birds were singing their sweetest, the flowers were dressed in their most brilliant array. White-bodied kingfishers, with azure heads and wings, were wading in the rivulet. The jewel-backed lizards had come out for the daily sun-bath. Nature smiled and went on with her work as usual. Only man, Nature's eldest child, was in mourning

They came into the village, still garlanded with its lovely orchids, still revelling in the background of brilliant tropical vegetation. But the beauty of the place was repulsive to them; it seemed a malignant mockery to the misery of its human inhabitants.

Married women were sitting down, rocking themselves to and fro, crooning mournfully. Gloomy-faced men were standing about in knots of twos and threes, talking in moody undertones. The young of both sexes seemed almost beside themselves with terror—as well they might be.

The Europeans, unused to so violent a display of outward grief—justly called for though it might have been—could not have stood the scene for long.

Mytto came up to them. "Ebry has been trying to persuade the King to have you sent," he said. "But Oleron made reply that if a white man went to Daji, the chief sorcerer should go with him."

"I guessed Ebry would try that," replied Sneyd. "It was a foolish move on his part."

He said no more then, but the chief sorcerer's amiable intentions on their behalf was not likely to be forgotten by either of the three white men. However, the individual in question put in his appearance just then, and the ghastly object of his visit put all other questions on one side of the nonce. He had with him two bags of *tappa*, and in sight of every one he placed into each four scarlet beans, and then added into one as many white beans—less four—as there were unmarried girls under the age of twenty; and into the other a corresponding number for the boys. All under the age of thirteen were exempt from the drawing. The rest poor trembling things, were thrust, or came of their own accord, into the centre of the green.

The boys drew first. Ebry called the names, and one by one they came and hazarded their lives. Four got the

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fateful colour, and remained silently and stoically by the chief sorcerer's side. The others ran joyfully back to their relatives.

Then came the girls' turn. Poor shrinking things they were plucky enough too when it came to the point, and dipped their little fingers into the unlucky bag with scarcely so much as a tremble. Ten passed the ordeal unscathed. Then Ebry called for Mytto's sister.

Poor Norah went forward, walking with head proudly erect and unfaltering step. Into the fateful bag went her slender arm. She drew it out again, held up a scarlet bean, and stepped back without a moment's hesitation amongst the four doomed lads at the chief sorcerer's side, she glanced in O'Neill's direction. His burning glance met hers, and in three bounds he was beside her.

"Beware," cried Ebry, "lest you share her fate," and tried to snatch the girl away. The Irishman's great hard fist drove through the air, and the chief sorcerer went to earth with a thud that could be heard all round the circle.

Instantly there arose a scene of wild uproar. The older men, with the memory of that awful war still green upon them, were for sending in their eight victims. The younger men and most of the women were on the side of the whites. Some ran to their homes for weapons, others snatched anything heavy that was at hand—hoes, logs of wood, stones even. O'Neill, with Norah beside him, was standing back to a great cotton-wood tree with his drawn sheath knife clutched in a brawny fist, and a look upon his face that boded ill for anyone who interfered with him. Sneyd and Sandy were at hand similarly armed, ready to back up their companion if he was molested. It seemed as if civil war would be added to the other horror.

The chief sorcerer went to earth with a thud.

The chief of the village saw this. He had been wavering between the two parties with muttering lip and puckered brow. He was drumming restlessly on the ground with a heavy spiked war-club he held in his hand, and was evidently arguing out what course of policy he ought to pursue. He looked at Ebry, who had picked himself up, and was standing in the midst of an excited group of elders. And then he looked at the tree which was the opposite faction's rallying-point. His friends, the three white men, were there; his best loved daughter was with them, saved at any rate for the present; his only son, who would succeed him in the chieftainship, had just thrown in his lot with those who were seeking to protect his sister from hurt.

Maantee's mind was made up. He walked across to the cotton-wood tree, and planting himself in front of the group, leaned moodily upon the end of his club, and awaited developments.

The villagers had most of them been waiting for a lead. They were simple-minded folk, and unused to making up their minds on so momentous a question as one which would mean peace or war for the entire nation. But now that their chief had made his decision, most of them were contented to follow it. He was a man who never stepped in the dark. The move that he had taken, if good enough for him, was sufficiently well considered for them. So some singly, others in knots, they walked across the space, till nearly three-quarters of the excited crowd gathered round the cotton tree.

The few who were left stayed in the middle of the green, with Ebry exhorting vehemently amongst them. But they were far quieter than they had been before the division. They had no wish to resort to arms now. The disparity of numbers was too great. And so they let their weapons hang idly in their hands, and awaited the course of events.

Maantee stood forward. The murmuring voices of both groups were hushed. Every ear was strained expectantly The chief plunged *in medias res* without any useless preamble.

"So far as my village is concerned," he said, "the die is cast. An attempt has been made to levy the human tribute, which the emissaries of Daji are waiting for. Some of us have shown conclusively by our actions that we intend to resist the demand to the uttermost. The majority of us have declared in favour of this move and so the whole are involved. There are two courses left open for King Oleron to take. Either he must band together the other villages and make war on this, so as to subject it and make it render up its quota of victims; or he must bid the others make common cause with us, so that we all stand or fall together as one nation. Those who remember how kind and fatherly is King Oleron's rule, can have small doubt as to which alternative he will take. This terrible tribute has long weighed upon his mind with burning force. He has oftentimes consulted with us, his chiefs, how the island might be released from the cruel impost. And now that a firm stand has been made, I do not think he will be slow to seize on the opportunity of throwing off his chains altogether. So let every man go to his house, and make ready his tools of war. I will away to lay our case before the King. Mytto will have my charge till I return to take it up again."

Long accustomed to the system of patriarchal rule, the villagers received their chief's words with implicit confidence, and departed to their several abodes without delay; and the three whites, after satisfying themselves that there was no immediate fear of any fresh attempt to drag Norah and her co-unfortunates away, took themselves off forthwith to the Ledge.

"Whatever happens we're in for a scrimmage now," said O'Neill, "so we'd better be afther looking to see what there's in the armoury."

They had thought of this subject of lethal weapons before, in the quiet days when there was no immediate prospect of

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using them. The natives had long slender lances tipped with stone, or fish-bones; arrows similarly headed, and weak bows; shields made of light flimsy wicker-work, and great clumsy clubs. These they despised. Broadsword, hanger, or cutlass they would have been contented with; but none of these was forthcoming. The only steel blades available were their sailor's sheath-knives. But these were all worn thin with constant use, and even at its best a short one-edged dagger is but a poor weapon to wield in a regular *bonâ fide* battle, whatever may be its excellences in an indiscriminate hand to hand *mêlée*.

But they were not resourceless. On the 17th of January, 1745, Sneyd and O'Neill had seen the furious rush of the highland clansman at Falkirk break through the centre and left of King George's cavalry. They had seen those same kilted mountaineers doing wonders to avert defeat on the awful 16th of April at dark Culloden Moor. And they had seen them fight at other times besides. They were armed, some of them with musket, dirk, skene, and pistols, but few put much reliance on these. It was on claymore and target they placed their trust; and it was with the small round shields on their left arms, and the heavy basket-hilted broadswords in the other hands, that their furious charges were driven so remorselessly home.

The claymore was a cutting weapon. Its blow depended much upon the weight of blade and hilt, and upon the strength of the arm which drove it. So at a pinch a heavy wooden cudgel might be substituted with almost as good effect.

"You and I are very strong, O'Neill," said the ex-cornet, when they were discussing this point; "and Sandy here is a tougher handful than many of the natives would care about tackling If we can get well-balanced bludgeons, not too light and not too heavy, we ought to make fair stick-play with them; and a light strong target will help to keep our own heads safe, whilst we are endeavouring to break other people's."

There was no bull's-hide available wherewith to make the targets, nor iron plates, nor brass nails, nor steel spikes. But a disc of the iron-bark tree would be hard enough to turn either the point or the edge of a native weapon; and from this material they set about making their shields. The work took a considerable amount of care and patience, but they stuck to it, and got the three targets completed within a day and a half.

O'Neill contemplated his handiwork with a look of comic dismay. "I've fit wid most things from fists to sixteen-pounder carronades," he said, "an' have been in all sorts of scuffles, from pitched battles betwixt kings to chape scrimmages afther a cock-fight, but I've never tried to carry a bulkhead like this in front of me. Begob, but it's a terrible impediment."

"You won't think it an impediment," said Sneyd drily, when you want to parry blow or thrust. "You'll find the wooden bulwark come in more usefully than your unprotected arm could do, tough as shoe-leather though its skin may be."

"Maybe you're right," admitted the Irishman. "Many's the time I've fingered blackthorn at weddin' or wake. But that was always for breakin' heads in a friendly sort of way. With this shillelagh"—he posed his new club thoughtfully —"there's different sort of business to be done. Don't yez think now, that the hard end might be ornamented a thrifle? I've heard me father say, that in the auld days a half-fut or so of scythe-blade let into the end made a very sweet wapon. There's no scythe handy, o' course, but I was thinking that a few nate spikes of this same ironwood would make a handmoser tool of it."

Sneyd shuddered. "War always had its ugly side," he said, "but you are showing up some very inartistic details. Don't be so confoundedly bloodthirsty, man."

"Bloodthirsty is it!" exclaimed O'Neill, with sudden energy. "And why not? I don't deny it. I am going to be bloodthirsty when this business comes on. Look you, I'm going just to kill as many of them Dajians as ever strength an' luck will let me. Dirty, savage-minded cannibals, they cumber the face of the earth."

"They are cannibals, certainly. But, then, remember the Ermans are no better. This is a bad business, anyway. There will be some wild, awful scenes after the fight."

"You mean?" said Sandy.

"I mean that our quiet, gentle friends down in the village yonder will turn to tigers when once they have smelt slaughter. Look how the savage instincts glared from their faces when the row started over that infernal bean-bag. If one blow had been struck, don't you think there would have been a general *mêlée*? And if we three happened to have gone under, aren't you sure that the very men who dined with us yesterday would have dined upon us to-morrow? The reason is obvious, according to their lights. We are reputed clever. We are clever, compared to them. They hold—the teaching of ages has told them—that the brain, the wit, the soul of the eaten is taken up by the eater. Add to which belly is one of their chiefest gods, and human flesh the greatest delicacy. As to the social crime of cannibalism, that has never dawned on them. We were at fault there. Whilst the land was quiet, and we had influence, we should have inveighed against it. Now, I fear, it is too late. They are over-excited to listen to calm and dispassionate reasoning. However loudly we expressed our loathing for such practices, I fear they would never quit the feast, if human flesh was steaming in the ovens."

The other two felt the sad truth of what Sneyd had said, and made no attempt to controvert it. Whatever way the tide of war might turn, there would be black, awful scenes enacted on that fair tropical island before another month had passed away.

But it was no time for unavailing regret. King Oleron had decided for war. The younger and more hot-headed spirits had been for opening the ball by killing and eating the Dajian envoys there and then. But the old King forbade this. His motives for doing so were perhaps not very high ones. He said that, if the men returned to Daji empty-handed, but with sound skins, their countrymen would think that the Ermans felt themselves strong again, and were prepared for the consequences of their act. This idea might take hold, and so war would be averted. On the other hand, if their envoys were—or—disposed of, the news would soon leak out, and then war would be declared for vengeance, if for no other motive. So the scowling savages were put into their canoes with very scant ceremony, and found themselves making for Daji, not at all sorry to find their skins were safe so far.

In the meanwhile no time was lost. The hope that Daji would not seek to reimpose the tribute by force was too slender a one to be much relied upon. War preparations were set on foot without delay, and the whole island was in a bustle.

It must not be supposed that the military re-organisation was anything after the European style. There were no regiments to fill up to a war footing. There were no factories where extra pressure could turn out arms and ammunition in rapid, hourly stream. There was no arsenal full of warlike stores and other necessities for a campaign. Each man provided his own weapons, and held himself in readiness to do whatever his chief ordered. Each man would, more or less, fight for his own hand. There was no mobilisation.

The Ermans had numberless canoes. I suppose one might say they had a fleet. But the Dajians had established such a reputation for naval prowess, that it was decided to make no attempt to give them battle on the seas. So the canoes were drawn up high and dry, and most of them hidden, as far as possible, amongst the mangrove bushes, in swamps, where nobody was likely to come across them.

The three Europeans, with the energy that was their birthright, tried hard, but vainly, to get the chiefs to settle

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on some definite plan of defence. The Ermans had fought for ages according to circumstances which cropped up on the day of battle, and military manœuvres were beyond them. There was not time, when the war trumpet had sounded, to teach tactics to a whole nation utterly ignorant of them. Sneyd laboured earnestly to instil the rudiments of drill into the villagers in his own immediate vicinity. Some of them attended to him at first, out of mere curiosity; but even those soon tired, got listless, and finally strolled carelessly off, and refused to trouble themselves further.

"We have done our best," said Sneyd disgustedly, after giving up his attempt. "But they are just hopeless. If I'd authority I'd brain two or three, to teach the others discipline. But that's the worst of it. I have no real command over them. Mytto would back me up, I believe, if he were chief. But Maantee thinks drilling mere foolery; and although he was too polite to stop me, he's far too apathetic to make the beggars try and pay any useful attention. I even went over and expostulated with Oleron about it, but he's as bad as the rest. He shrugged his shoulders, said something about it being useless to alter what's bred in the bone, and clearly showed he didn't see the use of interfering."

"Things look blue," remarked O'Neill, and then there was a silence, which Sandy broke. "You have omitted one thing from your calculations," he said. "The Dajians are probably just as undisciplined as these fellows are here. So, as regards that, we shall stand on an equal footing of disadvantage."

CHAPTER VI.

How the Dajian canoes landed on Erma: how a great battle was fought: and how Sandy Carmichael discouraged anthropophagy.

The shores of Erma were of two kinds, approachable and unapproachable. The latter consisted of those portions which were fringed with mangrove bushes. These grew in deep, slimy, stinking mud, with the salt water oozing in and amongst them, so that it was hard to tell where sea ended and land really began. No one would think of landing amongst the mangroves. But on the other portions of the coast there was a foreshore of coral shingle, on which one could beach a canoe with the greatest ease.

The shores of Erma were deserted by all human beings. An enemy was hourly expected, but no Erman ever dreamed of turning out on sentry-go during the hours of darkness; and it was night now. The moon had raced her course, and had sunk out of sight under the horizon. But the stars were out, twinkling like little sparks of white or yellow light through the purple darkness overhead. Beyond the black waters of the lagoon one could see a fairly continuous and ever-moving line of white. That was the Pacific swell breaking itself on the jagged coral of the barrier-reef, and spreading into shrieking, yeasty surge. Further out all was veiled in the velvety darkness.

Gradually the blackness began to become less opaque, to thin, as it were. Morning was coming. But it did not rise gradually, after the manner we are accustomed to in our temperate zone. It comes almost as rapidly as the smoke clears away after a gunshot. A grey spectral shadow was cast over the labouring rollers; that was the dawn. Then followed the first rays of light, flashing into view at the far and calm edge of the ocean. A live ember shot up from below, rested for a moment on the rim, and then, in a matter of seconds, the red sun stood full and round on the level east, and the long tropical day had begun.

There were men to see the sunrise on this special day, which was something out of the common. Ocean was as a rule deserted, and land asleep. But although Erma was as usual still wrapped in slumber, there had been some bold mariners piloting their night's course by the stars. When day broke, there might have been seen eight-and-forty canoes, all more or less large, standing in for the entrance of the reef. They were all under sail, and were all lashed two and two in a manner which has been previously described. They were in no particular order or formation, and the sternmost craft was at the end of a broken line that straggled quite three miles away from the leaders. But this seemed to concern no one. Canoe after canoe slipped out of the heavy ocean swell into the smooth waters of the lagoon. Steersmen aroused their sleeping crews, and sail was run down. The double canoes were separated into their component vessels, each manned by a complete crew of paddlers who were also fighting men.

There was no hurry exhibited. The shore was apparently (and really) still deserted, but the first invaders showed no immediate inclination to disembark. They sat in their narrow craft eating up the remainder of their sea stores, chatting, inspecting their weapons. Not until the last laggard had come in through the barrier reef, and leisurely prepared for action, was the word passed round to head in for shore.

To view the combat from the side of the Ermans.

All the males of the island, save the aged and very young, had been turned out at the first alarm, and mustered on the beach. They were in ample time to receive the invaders. They could have done nothing by being earlier. The white men's notion of planting sentries was new, and therefore absurd. As it was, by sticking to tradition, no one of them had lost their night's repose; and if one or other of the whites had been on the watch all night, well, there was no doubt as to who was the loser by such a piece of foolery. Why, they had even had time to send the women and children away into tolerably safe hiding in the woods, in case of—well in case of any awkward contingency.

So they stood on the shingle, and wasting their wind by calling out insulting names to the advancing Dajians, which the Dajians on their part returned with interest. These preliminary vollies did no one any harm, and did no one any material good. But the interchange of verbal courtesies of this kind is a necessity to savage nations before they feel in fighting trim, as we learn from Homer and other writers who have chronicled their deeds.

When the canoes were within range, or a little before, missiles began to be exchanged. The Dajians heralded their coming with a few arrows, but most of them were too busily engaged in paddling for the supply to be large. The Ermans, on the other hand, having no other occupation, relieved their excitement, which was naturally intense, by firing as rapidly as their muscles would let them. They shot their arrows, which did but little harm; they threw lances, which, for the most part, fell wide of the mark; and they hove jagged prices of coral, which, if true to their aim, either bruised or benumbed, but never killed.

And so the keels of the canoes grated on the shingle with but few casualties amongst their occupants.

However, there had been enough shouting, and enough of ugly matters hurling about to get men's blood up; and so there was little hesitation in commencing the next phase of the combat. In the canoes in the water, on the white shingle, the battle sprung into red cruel life. It was hack, hew, thrust, and parry; and as the savages grew savager, it grew to be hack and hew, and thrust alone, for each panted to get a blow home in his adversary's body, rather than to guard his own head from fracture.

The slaughter was immense. It always is when men fight hand-to-hand, instead of aiming at one another with fire-arms, which they can't hold straight. It was a case of kill or be killed, and very often of kill and be killed. The combat reddened as it proceeded. The white coral strand was crimsoned in the places where it wasn't hidden with still or writhing bodies. The ruddy wavelets washed corpses to and fro at the water edge. There was no sparing of wounded men. If any one went down some one was sure to smash in his skull with a mace, or slash him with a heavy wooden sword, and then the rest of the combatants would

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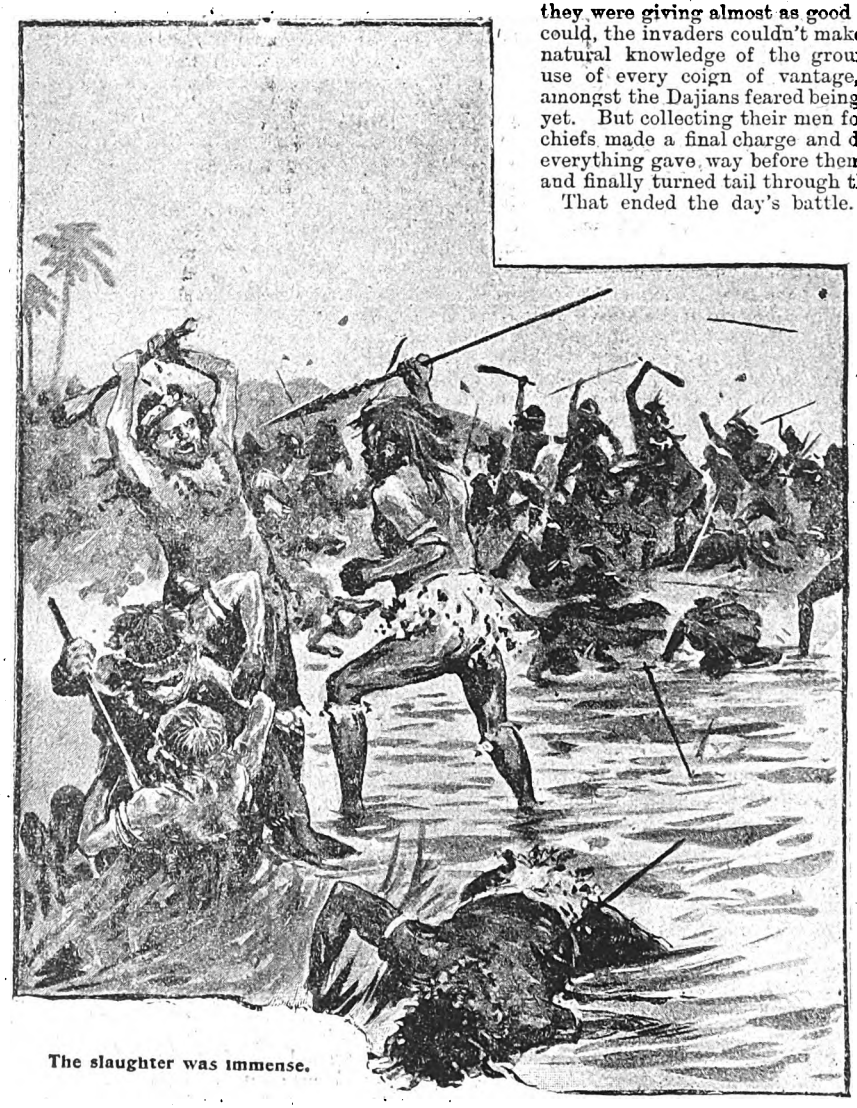

The slaughter was immense.

trample him thoroughly under foot to make sure that he wouldn't come round again. It was a hot thing whilst it lasted.

Gradually—none could say when or where it began—the field of battle began to move. At first it drifted slowly, but once the mass of men had gone on the move, its own momentum helped to keep it going. Indeed, till they found themselves amongst the outermost scraps of the vegetation, few on either side knew that retreat and pursuit had in effect commenced. But the change from cool, splashing water, to scratching stubborn shrubs was too marked to pass by unnoticed even in such a tropical fight as that was; and so, whilst it filled the Ermans with feelings akin to despair it raised the hopes of the men of Daji even above what they were before.

But the battle was not finished yet. Disputing stubbornly every inch of the way, the Ermans fought on with stubborn fury, and many a stout man went to earth in cover that was too thick to make sure where the lethal blow came from. Nor was the day lost or won. That the Ermans were in retreat—compulsory retreat—it is true, but they were giving almost as good as they took; and do what they could, the invaders couldn't make them run. Indeed, from their natural knowledge of the ground, they made such thorough use of every coign of vantage, that the more faint-hearted amongst the Dajians feared being driven back into the sea even yet. But collecting their men for one berserk effort, the Dajian chiefs made a final charge and delivered it with such fury that everything gave way before them. The Ermans wavered, broke, and finally turned tail through the trees.

That ended the day's battle. There was no pursuit. The Dajian leaders knew too well the danger of ambushes in such thick jungle as that into which the Erman army had filtered away. Besides, their men's skins were too full of wasps' stings to chance them near any more wasps' nests. So they drew them off, and taking possession of a deserted village on the coast, overhauled the field of battle, licked their wounds, and spent the rest of the day and much of the evening eating—well, if you can't guess what, I'm not going to tell you.

It is a strange thing, but if a bagged fox be set down in his own neighbourhood, he will run (if circumstances permit of his running long enough) for his own earth. He may start off in a totally different direction. But in the end he is sure to make for the old familiar cavity.

And so with the Ermans. Many of them ran a long way through the woods; many hid there for a considerable number of hours, out of wind, out of spirits; but by nightfall, all who were capable of doing so instinctively moved back towards their own proper villages. They advanced to them cautiously, carefully, suspecting ambushes, trembling at a sound, hiding from their own friends, dodging their own brothers. But they reached their homes—all save those unfortunates whose settlement was occupied by the Dajians—and then they, too, must need start their orgie.

Again details are needless. And for comment we may say that they didn't know any better.

But in the village which was under Maantee's patriarchal government there was a row about the matter, and the three Europeans were at the bottom of it. It happened in this wise. They had fought for all they were worth so long as fighting was going on, had each done more than his share of damage to the invaders' limbs and bodies, and then when everybody else ran, they ran too. Having nowhere better to go to, they followed the fox's plan and ran home. There they turned from killing men to curing them. At this latter practice Sandy added to his already great reputation, and bandaged, sewed, splinted, and amputated with as much coolness as he had done on board ship with a proper case of tools, and every piece of special tackle ready to hand.

He was in the act of relieving Maantee of a couple of badly-smashed fingers, when a great shouting arose close by, of which he naturally inquired the reason.

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"They're bringing in some Dajians."

"Prisoners?"

The chief smiled. "No, they're dead."

"What are you going to do with them. Bury 'em?"

Maantee signified that portions of the deceased would shortly be entombed in his own stomach.

Sandy Carmichael went stolidly on with his operation; amputated the fingers, and dressed the stumps. Then he wiped his knife on a tuft of grass, replaced it in the sheath slung to his belt, and addressed his patient.

"Maantee," he said, "why do you wish to eat those dead men?"

"To obtain their strength and their courage," replied the chief, promptly, "and to add it to my own."

"You can do no such thing. The notion is an utterly mistaken one."

"My fathers believed it," said Maantee, significantly.

"Then your fathers were in error, as they were about many other things. Continue this horrible custom, and the war will go against you. Give it up, and you will triumph over the men of Daji, who still continue it."

The chief shrugged his shoulders, and showed signs of going away. Sandy laid a restraining hand upon his arm. "Maantee," he said, "I would that you had accepted a warning from my mouth. Now I must use a force known to the white men from the East alone. Your sorcerers have it not. They have not so much as imagined its existence. I am going to make those dead Dajians speak, and confirm what I have said."

Maantee's brow darkened.

"It is ill to make jest of some matters," he said, and again made as though he would move away.

"Wait," exclaimed Sandy. "For the second time you have despised my words. Now I will not spare you any part of the ordeal. All your warriors are collected there on the green. Come to them, and cry for silence."

The chief did as he was bidden, and being somewhat angered at the manner in which he had been taken to task, added maliciously that the youngest of the white men could by sorcery make the corpses speak. He made no comment on the avowal, but the simple statement was sufficient. An instant hush fell upon the assembly, and every eye was turned upon Sandy Carmichael.

In the centre of the green, a wood fire was burning and crackling away in a pebble-lined pit. The naked corpse of a Dajian lay on the soft mossy turf beside it. The juxtaposition was suggestive. Sandy took his stand near there, and the villagers grouped themselves in expectant semicircle opposite him. Sneyd and O'Neill, seeing that something was going on, came up and stood near their companion.

Sandy was very nervous at first at having to speak before so large and attentive an assembly, but he gained confidence as he went on, and before a dozen sentences had passed his lips he was fully warmed up to the work.

"I want to warn you against the horrible food which lies here before me," he said, "ready for the oven, which is even now heating for its reception. The island teems with provisions. Your meals are got for the plucking. You do not desire human flesh because your frames are wasted through scarcity of food. You would feast upon the body of your fellow-creature through a mistaken notion that with the flesh you take up the qualities. You think to swallow a share of the dead man's courage, his strength, his nerve, his wit, and add it to your own——"

"And so we shall do," exclaimed the crowd. "Our fathers have told us that it is so."

"Your fathers told you many things; but, being men, they were liable to err. They erred in this. It is impossible to take from a dead man his good qualities. They fly away into the air as soon as ever the body is killed. It is only the bad qualities that remain; cowardice, treachery, fear. And these it is that you gain when your stomachs have received the horrible meal."

A strong murmur of dissent hummed from the crowd, and more than one fist was clenched in menace.

Sandy held up his hand for silence, and proceeded:

"You do not believe me," he said, "and perhaps it is not to be wondered at that you refuse to take my single word against the united testimony of all your forefathers. But I will bring evidence to your ears that will convince them even against their strongest desires. See this Dajian beside the oven. His skull is smashed to a pulp with a club blow. He has been stark and stiff for hours. It matters nothing to him whether his body is buried in Erman ground or in Erman stomach. He has no cause to lie now. If he speaks you will believe him?"

The assembly replied with a contemptuous affirmative. They had little fear that speech would pass from those cold dead lips.

Sandy Carmichael bowed, as though accepting a challenge to make good his words, and then, turning, walked away into the shadow of the trees. Presently he came back bearing with him an armful of leafy branches. He proceeded to cover the corpse with these, taking care that no portion should remain exposed. Then, taking the burning logs from the fire, he threw them on the branches, till the dead Dajian was covered with a pile of blazing wood.

"The cold body is being warmed with the heat," he said, "and presently it will be able to answer my questions."

There was no reply to this observation, save for a contemptuous laugh from one or two of the villagers. But of this Sandy took no notice. He was gazing intently at the

The chief shrugged his shoulders and showed signs of going away.

fire, and making signs with hands and arms to something in the flames visible apparently to himself, but unseen or unnoticed by all besides.

There was a ten minutes' pause. The natives' superstitious feelings were thoroughly worked up. Everything was mysterious. The surroundings fitted the scene. Night

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The crowd of natives shrunk back in superstitious horror.

had fallen, darkly and suddenly. The great fire blazed in the middle of the clearing; hissing, crackling, throwing up wavy tongues of flame into the smoky gloom overhead. Beside it was the white man, making his incantation. Around was a ring of savage figures, partly lighted up by the glare, partly in deep shadow. Beyond were the thick woods.

Not a human sound was heard; each breath was checked. Every man of Maantee's village was ripe for receiving wonders.

Suddenly a noise as of a sigh arose from the burning pyre. The white man bent down his ear, said something in a low voice and in his own tongue, and then moved a pace or two backwards.

A thin querulous voice, proceeding apparently from the very heart of the flames, broke upon the stillness of the assembly. The tones were faint at first, as though the speaker was weak and weary, but they increased in strength to loudness as he went on.

"Why do you wake me?" asked the voice. "Have I not lived my earthly life, and passed from it hardly enough? I have been weary, weary, weary; and this blow on the head gave me sleep. 'Tis hard to be roused now. Let me rest again."

"The Ermans," said Sandy, "would eat your body."

"Ha! ha!" The voice gave vent to a horrid grating laugh. "I daresay. I should be eating Ermans now, were I alive. We of Daji were as ignorant as they."

"How mean you, ignorant?" inquired Sandy.

"We thought that with the body we caught the spirit, that which nerves the arm, and fills the brain, and makes wit, courage, skill in war. Poor dolts that we were!"

"Then where is this spirit?"

"It sits beside my head. You cannot see it, though it is visible to me. It is a colourless shape, clear as water, light as a breath, untouchable as that which exists not. Water cannot harm it, nor fire, nor any power that is in man's hand. Yet in it is all that was ever good in me. Only the bad qualities remain in my body. You can have them if you will. Eat this dead flesh, and they are yours. And now, O mighty sorcerer, let me sleep again."

"Sleep!" responded Sandy, and coming near he kicked away the burning brands, and exposed to view the corpse in exactly the same condition in which it had been before.

The body was uncharred; the face was unblackened; not a hair was singed from the head.

The crowd of natives shrunk back in superstitious terror. The white man's authority over fire, and his power over the dead, was to them something superhuman.

They accepted what they had heard without question. Such evidence could not be gainsaid.

"So, Sandy," said Sneyd, when they had got back to the Ledge, "you have stopped cannibalism in Maantee's village by a little bit of conjuring. I don't care for trading on people's ignorance as a general thing, but in this case the end fully justifies the means. The ventriloquism I could understand; but what beat me was, how you managed to build a bonfire on the top of that poor Dajian fellow which didn't roast him."

"Well," said Sandy, "that was a trick that I got hold of by accident. Whilst I was cooking the other day, the glare of the fire made my eyes ache; so I plucked a branch from a shrub near at hand, to shelter them. Imagine my surprise to find that it completely warded off the heat as well.

"I made more investigations with the foliage of the same plant, and found that by waving branches of it round me, I could actually walk through a fire, or even sit in one without getting scorched. The shrub is a fairly common one,* though I don't know its name; but none of the natives seem to know of this particular property it possesses. And so that is why I ventured to turn it to profitable account."

(To be continued.)

* The shrub is *Tii*. It was very well known to the idolatrous priests of Tahiti. They made use of this property of quelling the heat of flames, to assist in the performance of miracles, which otherwise would not bear a close scrutiny. They used to perform conjuring *séances* in the middle of a zone fire; and holding branches of the *Tii* plants, they were rendered impervious to the fiery tongues of flame with which they were surrounded.

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SHE BOUGHT IN QUANTITIES.

MR. AND MRS. DASHER had not gone on a honeymoon; they had determined to stop at home and economise. The father had given her a cheque for fifty pounds, and Uncle Openpurse one for a hundred.

When hubby had gone away to business after breakfast she rushed upstairs and put on her bonnet, while her fingers trembled with suppressed excitement and a scarlet flush intermittently suffused her damask cheeks. Looking into her purse for the three-hundred-and-forty-fifth time to see if the notes were all right, she tripped down the stairs and sought the butcher's shop.

"I want some beef," she smiled.

"I have an excellent cut here, madam; sweet as a nut; it weighs about three pounds."

A brilliant flash of scorn came out of her eye, and struck the portly butcher.

"What is your lowest wholesale price for an ox?"

He quoted twice the amount he had given, and awaited results.

"Please send me two of them round as soon as possible to this address—stop, you can make it three. And now I would like some liver; I *do* so love liver and bacon."

The price, to her mind, being moderate, she paid for twenty pounds of liver, and for ten pounds of pork sausages, and a quarter of a ton of ice to keep it all cool.

Then she sailed down the street to the grocer, and asked the sum required for butter.

"The best is eighteenpence a pound, m'lydy; can't be beat anywhere."

Her sweet little nose was lifted high in scorn, and the grocer shivered before a withering glance.

"I shall require four tubs, if you please; also seven Cheddar cheeses, and a barrel of moist sugar. If you will quote your lowest wholesale price for treacle, you may send ten pounds, and I should also like a dozen hams, and a box of eggs. This is the address. Good-morning."

The grocer sank into a tub of margarine as her dainty form melted through the doorway. And as he sat there, in a state of collaspe, she returned hurriedly, and added an order for two barrels of flour and fifty bladders of lard.

The fishmonger wiped his hands on his apron, and began flopping about a fine hake, when she started to interview him.

"I want rather large quantities of fish, if you please," while her eyes glistened with a strange and glad light. "What are your bloaters a box, a chest, or barrel, or however you sell them? I want some whitebait, too. I *love* whitebait. I also shall require four or five dozen eels, if you can let me have them; my husband loves eels. Also, if you have some crabs and lobsters, you might let me have six dozen of each, only they must be alive."

The tradesman swallowed a shrimp, and his wonderment, and made entries in a large book, and when she had given him the address, she left for the live poultryman's place of business lower down the street.

Mrs. Dasher had a theory of her own about poultry. She was fond of a nice duck, and still more so of a cut from a goose, while she was a perfect Russian in her hankering after turkey. But she never had swallowed any part of one that had been bought dead, for, you see, she had been brought up on a farm.

So, after much scrupulous examination, she decided that three dozen roosters, together with a score of ducks, and thirty-three turkeys (the odd three being thrown in because of the quantity bought), and forty-seven geese would suffice her purpose for the time being.

But, you will say, kind reader, is this economy? Read on. Strange and unfathomable are the ways of woman, especially the woman newly married. Mrs Dasher was economy itself.

On her way back she met a man with a barrow selling oranges. They were large and ripe-looking and mouth-watering, and she asked the price (just as a matter of form), and paid for the lot, and told the man where to take them.

Outside the building where she and her hubby rented four rooms were arranged some half-a-dozen carts, the practical and satisfactory result of her morning's hard labour. Her eyes glistened, and a glad smile played about her lips as the sight met her gaze.

As she swept round the corner, two men were carrying in the carcase of an ox, followed by three others supporting a block of ice in a blanket, and in their immediate footsteps followed a man struggling with the bloaters.

At length they went, and she, despatching a messenger for her husband, nimbly scrambled over the purchases, and tried to make things a bit straight in the drawing-room, where most of the goods had been lodged, owing to want of supervision before she had come.

After a time she thought she heard her husband calling, but the fowls were singing so sweetly to the accompaniment of the turkeys, that she could not discriminate.

He came through the window at last, for the doors were blocked with goods. He stepped on some split whitebait, which were slippery, and sat down, shooting his legs into the crate of crabs, and bringing down two blocks of ice on his lower chest, while seven geese resented his efforts to strangle them, and one eel went down the back of his neck and another up the sleeve of his coat.

After the ice had melted, he was able to get up, and then he made his way to where his wife's voice sounded high above the feathered chorus. She could not come to him because, through some mischance, she lay on a bed of eggs with a sheet of treacle, and a counterpane of calves' liver over her.

Mrs. Dasher began to get unhappy. She whimpered. She grumbled. Mopping the treacle out of her sweet mouth, and shaking a calf's liver out of her back hair, she tried to explain.

"Oh, I'm so miserable," she said, drawing a bloater out of her belt and dashing it in a tub of butter. "I didn't know it was going to be like this. I don't think your plan is good. I wish I had taken ma's advice. Oh, I am so miserable."

Before he married her, Dasher had impressed upon her the fact that, to economise, goods should always be bought in quantities.

"Strive to do a wholesale business as much as possible," he had said. 'For you get things much cheaper that way. Yes, strive."

She had striven.

JOHN MARTIN

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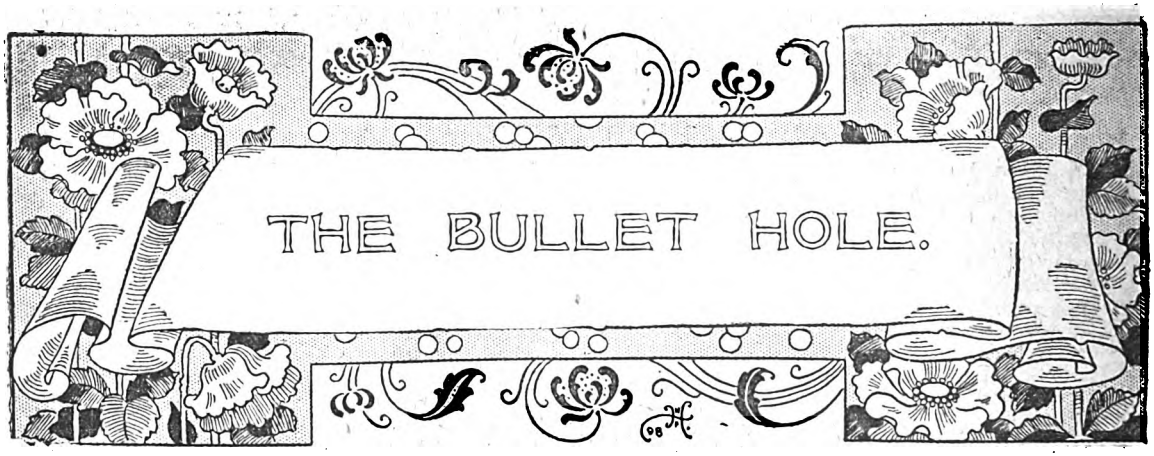

CHAPTER I.

The Insult.

The lustres sparkled in the faint bluish light that filled the drawing-room. It was so still that you might have fancied the place unoccupied, if a woman's low laugh had not broken the oppressive silence. By following the shining panels on the wall in the direction of the bow window, you caught first a glimpse of a jewelled hand twisting the fringe on the *portière*, and the red glint of a ruby necklace on a woman's white throat.

She was talking in musical monotone to someone in the shadow at her side. The voice that answered her from the semi-gloom belonged to Austin Gerard, the much-envied and much-maligned millionaire, whose escapades are still the talk of the town.

There was something soothing in the sound of her voice—a cooing intonation that fell upon the ear pleasantly.

When he spoke the tones were cold and passionless, and he kept up an incessant drumming on the arm of his chair with his long, white fingers as though he were nervous.

Had the lights been brighter, you might have seen that the lady was as dainty in colour as a panel by Carlo van Leo. The searching sunlight might have revealed some tints endowed by a not altogether beneficent nature, particularly about the eyes and cheeks, but at night she was adorable, from the sparkling slippers to the fairy foam of laces on her shoulders skilfully disarranged. Why this languorous light, these whispered words? What were they to each other?

"Ah!" It was the first exclamation she had uttered aloud. Gerard turned towards her hastily. She had risen, and was regarding him with a peculiar look in her eyes that baffled him. Surprised, he turned towards the drawing-room door. A man had entered noiselessly, and was standing before the fireplace warming his hands by the burning logs. Gerard started, and at that moment his companion struck him heavily across the mouth with her ringed hand.

"Coward—scoundrel!" she cried in a loud and angry voice.

Stung with surprise, before he could say a word she had glided from the room, her eyes blazing, her whole nature in a tumult.

Gerard stood looking after her dumbly, as if he half hesitated whether to follow or not. Then his eyes turned towards the fireplace and the stolid figure standing there. The man was now facing him, and his voice trembled with anger when he spoke.

"I shall not ask the meaning of this, to-night, Mr. Gerard. You are under my roof, and have a claim on my hospitality."

"But, my dear Drayton, I——"

"Enough! I prefer to hear the truth from my wife's lips. If affairs are as I believe, I shall demand an explanation from you to-morrow. Go!" And he pointed imperatively towards the door. "Go!" he repeated.

Gerard laughed nervously, picked up his hat and coat, and turned away. At the door he paused, and looked back. Drayton was still standing by the fireplace, as still as the alabaster caryatides that upheld the mantelpiece, though in his eyes there was an expression that Gerard did not care to see. But he shrugged his shoulders with an affected carelessness, buttoned up his coat, and went out into the snowy night.

After the door slammed, Drayton still stood in the same place. Once in a while his eyes wandered towards the embrasure where he had witnessed this strange scene—strange, and yet he seemed to understand it thoroughly. He threw his cigar, which had gone out, into the grate, and turning out the gas, laboured heavily upstairs.

"Marian," he called softly at the door of his wife's boudoir, "Marian."

She had taken off her evening dress and assumed a tea-gown of dark blue Chinese silk. She looked like a violet with a heart of gold. He saw that she had been crying, for tears still trembled about those eyes he had so often kissed to sleep. His heart grew hot within him as he thought of the scene that had just happened below. He drew her towards him, and kissed her softly on the forehead.

"Was he—did he?" stammered the poor fellow.

She laid one finger softly on his lips.

"Forget it—forget it—what you saw," she murmured. "You frighten me with that terrible look in your eyes."

"I want to know all—all," with sudden vehemence, "or——" He laid his hand half caressingly on her arm, and led her passively to a lounge in the corner. "Come, you shall tell me everything in your own way; take your own time, darling. Why, you—you don't think I am angry with you? Why——" and he kissed her

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again, as if that were more expressive than any words. "Come, tell me—tell me," giving her a gentle shake.

"I cannot—cannot," turning her face away again, and covering her eyes with a lace handkerchief.

There was an angry contraction of his features. He spoke now in a hard voice.

"You must! I will have a complete explanation of this strange scene. Now, why did you receive this man? You know his character; why did you receive him? Why not send down word you were ill?"

"I was alone in the house. I knew you had gone out without your key, so I answered the bell."

"Hum." His face cleared a bit. "Let us come to the point. What did he say to you?"

"I cannot tell you."

"He insulted you?" Silence. He pulled the handkerchief away from her eyes. "Answer me."

She answered him by bursting into tears upon his shoulder. He was satisfied. He felt a remorse that he had questioned her so severely now. He had done wrong to torture her so, and begged to be forgiven. There was some cologne upon the dressing-table, and he bathed her face softly, soothing her meanwhile with tender words, while he stroked her beautiful hair caressingly.

"My poor darling," he murmured brokenly, "how you have been injured! What pain you have suffered!"

She had grown more composed now; her sobs were fainter.

"Forget it, dear, as I shall try to do," reaching out her hand towards him.

"Forget it," he echoed, looking at her in a way that frightened her. "I will settle accounts with him to-morrow."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I will kill him, or he shall kill me!"

"A duel; impossible. You are not in France; the survivor would be called a murderer."

"I can arrange it so that no suspicion need be excited; so that it can be proved that the one who falls committed suicide."

"But, Arthur," faintly.

"Well?"

"To fight with him would be going to your death. He is an unrivalled shot. Have you no thought of me—of leaving me alone in the world? What is this man's life worth to yours? Better endure a thousand insults than to lose you." And her arms were again about his throat, and tears filled her beautiful eyes.

"I am determined," he said, "and something assures me," as he brought his teeth tightly together, "that I shall not be the one to fall." There was a short cry; she shuddered in his arms. "Be calm, my love; the right will conquer wrong," he added softly.

Her eyes opened slowly as he put her gently from him, and began walking slowly up and down the room. Her glances followed him with painful persistence as she leant back against the cushions, breathing heavily.

"I will leave you now," he said finally, pausing in front of her; "there is much that I must do before the morning."

Then a sudden strength seemed to seize her. She rose and moved towards him with resolute steps, standing between him and the door.

"You shall not leave this room until you have promised to give up this mad scheme," she said firmly.

"I have made up my mind."

"You shall not risk your life; no, nor take another's."

He made a step towards her, his eyes bent intently on hers, as if to read some new revelation in the strange light that filled them.

"Marian"—he paused and looked at her again; her figure seemed to flatten out against the door as if that glance were crushing her—"if you do not let me go, I shall think that you are afraid of the consequences to *him!*"

She clutched at the portiere as he passed out at the door. Then she turned, with set eyes looking into space. "If he should die!" came the husky whisper; "if he should die!"

CHAPTER II.

ALONE.

It was late in the morning when Marian awoke. She had taken some sedative to make her sleep. The clock chimed the hour of ten, and through her drowsy brain flashed the scene of the night before. She shivered as she hurried through her toilet. Perhaps there was still time to stop this dreadful affair.

"He will be killed! I know it—I feel it," she murmured, brushing out her lustrous hair with a trembling hand. The mirror was before her, and she could not help seeing how wan and grey her face looked in the dim light that filtered through the Madras curtains.

"I have aged ten years since last night," she thought, as she turned away.

The door of her husband's room adjoining was standing open when she reached it. There was no one within. Everything was in order. On the secretary by the window lay a large package addressed to her. She looked at it for some moments as if fascinated.

"To be opened to-morrow if I do not return," she read on the edge of the envelope.

"If I do not return," she repeated blankly, with a shudder. "If I do not return."

The sight of that white envelope seemed to irritate her. She picked it up and threw it hastily into the drawer of the secretary, locking it and placing the key in her bosom. Then she sat down on the sofa again. Her eyes roamed here and there about the room. She saw on the wall the portraits of her husband and herself in a morocco frame. The picture had been painted during their honeymoon, three years before. A handsome couple, people had said, and now—she turned her face away and closed her eyes.

She saw that face in a changed light. It was pallid and contracted, and on the broad white forehead there was an awful stain of blood. And then the closed eyes seemed to open, and a wavering finger pointed towards her, while the cold lips uttered one awful word.

She screamed and fled from the room to her own, where she locked and bolted the door. It seemed to her as if that shadow which her brain had conjured up was following her, and its rolling eyes were turned with sad intent upon her, while the lips muttered that terrible word in her frightened ears.

She stumbled towards her dressing-case and took a bottle of some brown fluid out of a little drawer. When the cork was withdrawn, it emitted a strong, sickening smell, that filled the room. She looked behind her with a furtive shudder, hesitated a moment, then lifted it to her lips. When she laid the little bottle down it was half empty. Keeping her eyes steadily away from the

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door, she moved slowly towards the sofa and lay there, face downwards, her face buried in the cushions.

Someone was bending over her, she was sure. Her husband with his livid face stood before her, with that dreadful wound on his brow. His cold lips were close to hers; slowly his rigid arms were reaching towards her. She screamed aloud and beat upon the walls with her hands. The diamond rings he had given her seared her fingers; the stones had become coals of fire. She drew them off and flung them from her. Where was that music? In the street? No; in the room. How soothing it sounded in the quiet room! She did not turn to see whence it came, lest this magic music might cease and the spell be broken.

Her terrors have been deadened by these delightful melodies. They revived all that was beautiful in her life, with none of its distress. The light drives away the darkness.

No longer that terrifying figure of her husband stands before her. It is her lover kneeling by her side, and in his eyes there is a divine light that is not of earth. Kisses burn her lips and fill her with a glorious exultation. He leads her away, and the walls melt before them into thin air. They pass through jewel-studded colonnades into a wondrous garden where all is musical and bright, and where iris-tinted birds flit here and there by waving palms and tinkling silver streams. And lulled by the perfect air in this Lethean land she lays down dreamily by a glistening pool among fragrant blossoms that fall in rosy showers from the tree above her head.

The balmy breeze caresses her floating hair. Above her head a bird with jewelled wings pours out its soul in song, as sweet as if the very spirit of love inspired each note. Lapped in this atmosphere of perfume, love and song, she rests her tired head upon her arm and drifts away into oblivion's sea.

CHAPTER III.

The Reckoning.

The night closed in with sleet and snow. Marian stood by the window peering out between the curtains on the street. She had lit all the lights in the chandelier and the candles in the sconces on the wall, it was so much more cheerful to banish all the shadows from every corner. Oh, if there were only some light to dispel the shadow from her heart that was bearing her down! She listened, but no one came.

Once a man paused in front of the house, but he passed on through the snow. Few carriages were abroad, but every one that passed sent a shudder through her heart, and she would lean faintly against the wall and press her hands tightly against her breast, that seemed full of burning pains. But the carriages passed by, and the hours, and no one came. She had eaten nothing all day, and at last she found herself too weak to stand at the window and watch.

Her untasted supper lay on the table where the maid had left it. She must have strength for what was certain to come. She dragged herself forward by leaning on the chairs, and lit the spirit-lamp to heat up the tea in the samovar.

The sight of food was repellent to her, but she managed to force a few mouthfuls down, and the tea warmed and strengthened her. Only her heart was as cold as ice, and throbbed as though it were forcing its way through her breast, panting for freedom. Was that a step? Someone in the hall? The dainty Sevres cup crashed on the plate as she felt a hand seize her arm with a cruel grasp. She shook it off, and without daring to turn her face, crawled towards the corner of the room with averted eyes.

"Who is it? Who is it?" she asked herself in a fever of doubt. "Oh, if he would only speak—only speak!"

"Well?"

It was her husband! She felt a ringing in her ears, a sudden numbness seize her as if she were losing consciousness.

He laughed and walked towards her slowly.

"Look me in the face," savagely catching her sleeve and dragging her close to him. "Look at me, I tell you," raising her head towards his.

She could not help seeing that his features were contracted, and that where he had bitten his lips there was blood that had trickled down on his white shirt. He looked as if he were going mad. She could not turn away, he held her in such a grasp.

"Why are you not glad to see me?" he asked with a terrible smile. "I can see that you have spent the day in tears on my account, and now that I have returned safe and well, having settled everything satisfactorily, why do you not fly to embrace, to weep over me? Why? I ask you why?" with an awful laugh.

She reached out her arms towards him with a wretched attempt at fondness in her eyes, and the phantom of a smile on her lips.

"Ah!" he exclaimed with a gesture of disgust, pushing her from him. "Duped once, but never again!"

She made a feeble effort to rise to crawl towards him.

"No lies," he snarled. "The insult," with sneering emphasis, "has been avenged." He took a paper from his bosom, talking nervously the while. "You thought you were safe. You trusted in his skill with the pistol. I had faith, for I was armed with the right. Listen to me," shaking her savagely by the arm. "I will not detain you long. He agreed to the duel.

"We each made out a statement that we were tired of life and wanted to end it by suicide. This paper was to be found on the body of the one who fell in order to quiet suspicion. I shot him dead. What! are you going to faint? There, there, I shall be through in a minute. This letter I found in his bosom. It was addressed to you. The bullet had passed through it, stamping it with a crimson seal. Look at it; kiss it," thrusting the paper into her face with a ferocious gesture; "kiss it, woman! it is red with his blood. I have read it. It is a touching epistle. He asks you to come to him, for you are free!"

"Arthur!"

"Yes, free! I tell you so. Go to him; he has called for you from the dead. Go!"

And he went down the stairs with that terrible laugh on his lips.

Ernest Pierson.

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One Good Turn.

At the age of twenty-two Celia Newman married Hamilton Ross for love.

She was at that time one of the prettiest girls in London. Not only that, but she belonged to very good family.

She was a flower that had retained its poetic delicacy in the fashionable life of a great city.

When she married Hamilton Ross, people were not surprised. She was not the girl to think of money. She loved him for himself, and that he was only an upright, simple, gentlemanly fellow, with a clerk's salary of £150 a year did not cause her any uneasiness or apprehension for the future.

That was seven years ago. In those seven years the hardships of life had settled down upon and almost crushed the Ross's. The £150 had only increased slightly, but the little Ross family had multiplied rapidly. When at night Celia dragged her tired feet upstairs to bed there were two little golden heads in the nursery cribs, and one in the cradle in her own room to bend over in silent good-night.

Though Hamilton Ross was the best fellow in the world, as good as gold and as honest as the sun, he did not seem to possess the inestimable quality of "being able to get on."

His wife's people hid what disappointment they felt and tried to make the best of things, for they were gentlefolk, with traditions behind them. Unfortunately, they were not wealthy enough to be of any material assistance to Celia.

Very comfortable themselves, in a completeness of luxury that their income just sufficed to produce, they looked on at their kinswoman's struggle with poverty, and saw her beauty, her gaiety her sweet serenity of soul, wearing gradually away.

These were small matters to Celia. Her love for her children, her concern for their welfare, engrossed her to the exclusion of all personal disappointments and chagrins. Poverty for herself and Hamilton would have been a thing to meet with a challenging smile; for her children, it was a misfortune to be averted at any cost. She thought of them growing up ill-educated and ill-clad, and she became frantic at her helplessness.

It was for their sake that she strove to keep in touch with the rich and fashionable society of her girlhood.

Here she was always welcome, for even poverty and an unfortunate marriage could not diminish the prestige of her family. The wealthy friends of her *beaux jours* were the means by which she hoped to raise her children into comfort.

Maternity had transformed the sensitive and dreamy young girl into a shrewd and calculating woman.

Her first step towards better circumstances was an unconscious one, the result of her kindly nature. She was at Mrs. Priestley's reception one afternoon, when she was surprised to see Mrs. Hilary there. The latter lady was of decidedly obscure origin, and in spite of her wealth and good bearing, she had never been able to obtain the entrance to society that she coveted. How she came to be one among that exclusive set, nobody knew; it was due to some great blunder, Mrs. Priestley afterwards explained to her outraged friends.

Everyone ignored her, and she was hesitating whether to retire or stay and face it out when Mrs. Ross forgot the traditions of her family and entered into conversation with her.

The ladies accepted this move on the part of Mrs. Ross with cool but refreshing incredulity, and one or two went home. Mrs. Hilary, in her upright, tightly-laced magnificence, breathing heavily under her green velvet carriage wrap, her card-case trembling in her large white-gloved hand, fronted the scene with a countenance of flushed but stolid immobility, and responded with admirable *aplomb* to Mrs. Ross's mild conversational attempts.

When she rose to go she had regained full possession of herself. She swept past the crowd of chattering ladies whose faces immediately became as stony as if Mrs. Hilary had been Medusa, with a bow fully as distant and haughty as theirs. But to Mrs. Ross she stretched out one of the white-gloved hands in a burst of irrepres

sible gratitude and strained her little fingers in a tremulous, eloquent pressure.

Driving home in her splendid carriage, Mrs. Hilary's anger died down very quickly.

She was an eminently good-natured woman, and one can become used to anything. Mrs. Hilary had passed unscathed through many such ordeals, and she was full of energy to pass through many more, if by so doing she could reach the summit of her ambitions, her one unrealised ambition—a position in society.

It was a hard struggle against prejudice, but she would succeed eventually; it was only a question of time. Patience, and seize all opportunities!

But the happy day when Mrs. Hilary would walk unchallenged into the citadel seemed as far off as ever.

She was one of those women against whom the prejudice of society becomes deeply rooted. She was a trifle too aggressive in her imperious, impressive, style. The magnificence of her surroundings and belongings was theatrical. Moreover, she was known to be resolute and daring. Might not this commanding outsider, once inside the jealously-guarded gates, wrench the sceptre from the rightful ruler's hand?

And so this Peri knocked and knocked at the gate of Eden, with no response. In vain did she organise fêtes and bazaars, and patronise worthy charities. Her contributions were accepted but she was not.

Mr. Hilary, who was exceedingly fond and proud of her, and felt bitter at the isolation of her position, gave her free access to his fortune and full permission to spend it as she thought best. She entertained lavishly, but, unfortunately never could induce any but the employés of her husband. (Mr Hilary was the proprietor of the great Hilary Iron works), to attend her entertainments.

The treatment she had received that day at Mrs. Priestley's reception was sufficient to show her how far she still was from the fulfillment of her dreams. Being alone that evening—the children had gone to a party at a house to which their mother was never invited—she described the scene to her husband as they sat over the last course of their long and luxurious dinner.

Mr. Hilary received the recital in silence. He was mute with discouragement and anger, for he truly loved his wife, and her cheerful and courageous acceptance of the innumerable slights and covert insults directed toward her had strengthened his love for her. Mr. Hilary, in the wild scramble of his fight for money, had been rubbed so close against the seamy side of life that his respect for most things had been quite rubbed off. Personal bravery was the one human attribute to which he was ready to make a passing obeisance, and it struck him that his wife possessed more of it than any one else he knew.

To-night he more than ever admired her uncomplaining admission of the prejudice existing against her, which she did not feebly deplore, but was quietly determined to forcibly override. But when she came to the part of her story which dealt with Mrs. Ross a mist of tears quenched the fire in her dark, bold eyes.

Mrs. Hilary had been slighted so often that the slight had lost its sting, but, for the first time since the distant days of her childhood, she had met with a friendly glance, a mute expression of generous sympathy, from a good woman.

Mr. Hilary did not immediately respond. He, too, was moved more deeply than he liked to show, even to his admired consort. He felt that he would like to go out and buy Mrs. Ross a diamond necklace, and place a thousand pounds to Hamilton Ross's credit in the bank.

He said, however, tracting the buxom outlines of the shepherdess with the tip of his spoon:

"They're very badly off, I've heard. He's in a firm in the city, and he hasn't got enough brains to stop a keyhole with, they say. He's hardly able to get enough to get his wife and children food enough to eat, and clothes to wear."

Mrs. Hilary, who was one of those ladies who knows all about everybody, especially the people who won't know them, gave him a spirited account of the poor circumstances of the Ross's.

"That poor girl," she said in conclusion, "who used to be such a beauty, was in rags—literally in rags. She was like Cinderella among all those staring peacocks."

"It might be possible," mused the husband, "to do something for them. I wouldn't mind giving them a hand; the only trouble is, they possibly wouldn't take it. He's a decent sort of fellow, and after the way she acted to-day, I'd in some way or other like to help them along a little."

He leaned back with his head on one side. His wife's eyes were upon him in a steady stare which was more absent-minded than exploring.

"If you helped her," she said slowly, "she might help me."

"How?" Mr. Hilary forgot the shepherdess and looked at his wife.

"Why," said that astute lady, "if you put it in their way to better their circumstances, in return might not she put it in my way to better mine?"

"Yes, she might, but she wouldn't. Those Newmans are all the same. Poor or rich, they think they're above everybody. You wouldn't get her to recognise you—not if you gave her the earth."

"It would be hopeless if she was Miss Newman still. But she's Mrs. Hamilton Ross, with three children and hardly enough money to feed and clothe them properly. She's fond of her children, and she will do anything to help them on. It's children that make tigers of some women and angels of others, just according to the way they stand. If I hadn't had children I mightn't have been so anxious to get a position."

"You think that if I help Hamilton Ross to a good position his wife will help you into society?" asked her husband.

"She will if she understands that my entrance into society is the price of her husband being put into some good position in the Hilary Iron Works, where he will get a salary upon which he can live like a Christian."

"It would be possible," said Mr. Hilary, thoughtfully, "to find a berth for him in the works. Johnson could squeeze him in somewhere, give him a nominal position with a big name; and he's a hard-working, honest fellow. We haven't got too much of that sort of thing in the Works now. We might in time find him quite useful."

"You might find you'd entertained an angel unawares," said his wife with a little laugh; "honest men don't grow on every bush. On the other hand, if Mrs. Ross would take me up, or even allow me to take her up, there would not be any more trouble about my position. By the end of the season there would be hardly a house in town where I was not received. These fashionable women are not so very remarkable, after all. They follow each other like sheep. Hilary, will you do it?"

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The query was only a polite formula which Mrs. Hilary's instinctively amiable nature prompted her to make. Her husband, in such a matter, was entirely at her command.

"Whenever you please," he said: "but as to its success, I'm not so sure."

"Oh, one must make ventures in this world," she said, lightly. "You've made them in your business, and generally won; I've made them in society, and generally lost; but this time I'm going to win. Make your plans for approaching Ross, and do it very slowly and carefully, and at the end just let him see—delicately—what the price is. Leave his wife to me. She will have prepared him long before you get that far."

The sudden irruption into the room by the children, jubilant from their party, put an end to further conversation.

In the course of the next ten days, a damsel sauntering up the street where Mrs. Hilary's residence was situated saw so astonishing a sight that she stopped short in her listless peregrination. Slowly ascending the sweep of steps that spread so grandly down from the great portico was Mrs. Ross, arrayed in her meagre best, a card-case in her hand.

The watcher loitered by with as serene an air of indifference as her curiosity would permit, and saw the visitor, after a second's parley with a butler, disappear between the wide portals.

Not two weeks after that some members of Mrs. Ross's own grand family were electrified to see drawn up in front of her humble door the handsome carriage of the newest build and style which the initiated knew to be the latest addition to Mrs. Hilary's well-appointed stables. The curiosity aroused by this spectacle overcame even that high-bred and chilly exclusiveness which had always distinguished the Newman character.

The ladies resolved to drop in upon their relative and surprise her, and entered her little drawing-room with an air of ingenuous, artless friendliness, but with the restlessly roaming glances of alert curiosity. There, among the worn down cushions, sat Mrs. Hilary, not in the least abashed; indeed, a keen eye might have detected something of suave triumph in her manner.

Undoubtedly she was very imposing; her self-possession was admirable, and as she rose to go—a regal figure in her glistening clothes of the latest and most gorgeous fashion—she seemed to fill the little faded room and almost crush the elegant occupants back against the wall.

What explanation Mrs. Ross offered to her amazed relations who shall say? That they went out and among themselves and their intimates expressed a surprise which struck the outside world as singularly temperate, is matter of history.

The damsel who had seen Mrs. Ross ascending the steps of the Hilary mansion hied her on her way and described that strange spectacle to all whom she knew.

Startling rumours began to circulate about Mrs. Ross's sudden acquaintance with Mrs. Hilary. People were denying this emphatically, when a paragraph in one of the papers ended all doubt.

The paragraph gave an account of a sumptuous dinner recently given by Mrs. Hilary, and there, first in the list of guests stood the names of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Ross and some of the Newmans.

Many intimate friends dropped in to see Mrs. Ross the next afternoon. They all wanted to know what convulsion of nature had taken place to so alter the Newman horizon. The lady parried every query with a cool unconcern which repulsed the most daringly curious. What the comments of these disturbed spirits were when two weeks later they learned through the efforts of a diligent press that the most seclusive member of the Newman family had entertained Mr. and Mrs. Hilary at "a choice dinner of the most *recherché* elegance" shall not be told in mere print. Moreover, the great and last move in the mysterious game was about to be played.

One morning the local world—fashionable, commercial and professional—had its eye arrested as it travelled slowly down the columns of its morning paper by a small paragraph. It was short and not sensational, yet the reading eye stopped at it even more quickly than at the murder above or the marriage beneath.

It merely stated without circumlocution that Hamilton Ross, formerly of the Universal Insurance Agency, had left his old employers to take the position of assistant general manager in the Hilary Iron Works.

Mrs. Hilary's prophecy came true; the fashionable world began to think that it had been wrong, and that there was really nothing against Mrs. Hilary after all. Later, when the Ross family moved to more spacious quarters, and Mrs. Ross gave a reception—at which she verbally announced Mrs. Hilary would be present—her invitations were freely accepted.

And before the end of the season the Peri had gained full admission to her coveted Eden.

TRISSY MARTIN.

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The Sons of Père Beaujeon.

A STORY FOUNDED UPON FACT.

THE fatal day had come at last. A day long feared and dreaded by poor old Beaujeon and his wife. Their two sons, the prop and comfort of their old age, had been summoned by the inexorable military law, which spares neither rich nor poor, neither strong nor weak—that cruel military law which robs the widow of her only child, drags the labourer from his plough, disdains not even the ailing and diseased, and is at once the scourge and the curse of fair France, groaning under a burden which eats into the very vitals of her being.

Pierre, the great muscular Pierre, and Jules, the delicate dreamy boy, were to be taken, to serve perchance under the torrid skies of an African desert, or in the pestilential swamps of Tonquin. At that very moment they were drawing lots. The *tirage* was in full swing, and the picturesque Normandy village of Arques was all agog with excitement. But in the trim little cottage covered with jessamine and westeria, an aged couple were filled with gloomy thoughts.

"Père" Beaujeon (as he was affectionately termed by the village) did indeed make a courageous effort to revive those feeling of youthful ardour and enthusiasm, which stood him in such good stead in earlier days when fighting the Kabyles at Sidi-bel-Abès. He strove to conjure the fierce passion of that bloody afternoon when the chasseurs, surrounded by crowds of Arab horsemen, hewed their way through the living mass, and after all was over, when Captain Le Chatellier, himself bespattered with blood, had singled him out with the ringing words: "*Tu es un brave!*" Père Beaujeon looked down at the cross which never left his breast, and tried to live his battles over again; but it was a sorry failure. Every now and then he would glance across at his wife's tear-stained face, and heave an involuntary sigh.

Presently he threw his pipe aside with an impatient gesture, laid his hard and knotted hand upon her knees, and said:

"It is the will of God, my dear. It is hard, eh! *oui*, it is hard, but it is the will of God."

"The will of God," she repeated slowly, with sorrowful emphasis, "yes, always—the will of God!"

Père Beaujeon was greatly moved, and, rising with difficulty, for the rheumatics had been troublesome of late, he shuffled off towards the window.

The shouts of the newly-enrolled conscripts echoed down the village street. The *tirage* was over, and scattered groups of young men passed by, singing the "Marseillaise," and appearing, or striving to appear, highly pleased with themselves and with the *regime* under which they lived. There were sullen looks among the crowd for all that, and many a sorrowful woman's face.

Old Beaujeon had eyes but for two forms. He had not long to wait. Two young men separated themselves from the noisy throng and made for the cottage. When his sons entered, the old man turned slowly round and faced them; he said nothing, but gripped the window-ledge tightly. His wife had risen, and fixed a strained, anxious glance upon the newcomers.

"*Eh bien! père, mère,* good news! good news!" they cried together. "We are both in the 27th Line, stationed at Lyons. Both in the same regiment! Think of it! Just think of it!"

This was, indeed, grand news—far, far better than anyone of them had expected, and under its happy influence Père Beaujeon and his wife visibly brightened. The old father revived sufficiently to even chaff his sons upon the humdrum life they would be compelled to lead.

"Ha, ha," he exclaimed jokingly, "*mes gosses,* you will have a miserable tame time of it. If you had been ordered to Algeria now—there would have been some fun, if ——"

Old Beaujeon paused. He had caught his wife's eye; in it was a mild reproach, and he collapsed, feeling rather ashamed of himself.

Pierre and Jules were to start the next morning, and the evening was spent in various preparations, the old folk ransacking every hole and corner which might bring to light something of use to their beloved sons. That evening, before going to rest, the family knelt for a few moments in silent and solemn prayer.

Why harp upon the bitterness of the parting! A last long strain to a heaving breast, a last quivering imprint of loving lips, and for old Beaujeon and his wife, all the glory had departed from the sunshine, all the brightness from their lonely hearth.

* * * * * *

No two young men could have been more dissimilar, both in character and physique, than Pierre and Jules Beaujeon.

Pierre was dark and handsome, of medium height, and more than usual chest development—a strong, sturdy, active youth, on whose bronzed and manly features determination was writ large.

Jules, who stood somewhat taller than his elder brother, was of exceeding slightness. His face and form were refined, almost to effeminacy. A dreamy, delicate boy, with a singular sweetness of disposition, he seemed to possess an inner life of his own, a spiritual life which no one could understand, not even his brother, to whom he was passionately devoted. A love passing the love of woman existed between these two. At home it had been the wonder and admiration of the whole village. Among the soldiery it was regarded with respect and a rough but kindly sympathy.

This love had always existed between them, and as they grew into manhood it increased tenfold. It was a touching sight to see the chivalry of Pierre for his weaker brother, and the intense pride which Jules took in Pierre's feats of strength and resolute will.

Jules was utterly unfitted for a soldier's life. This became painfully apparent after a few weeks in the barracks at Lynn. The arduous drill and wearisome marches along dusty roads in a hot sun exhausted him, and at the end of a day's work he was utterly worn out, and often barely able to stand. But he would not give in; if his body was weak, his spirit, at any rate, was high, and he held out manfully. To Pierre's entreaties

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that he would apply for leave to enter the sick ward, he invariably replied:

"What would they think of me at home, giving in at the end of six weeks! No, no, I shall get into it very soon. Besides, I am not ill, I am only tired."

But the weeks grew into months, and Jules did not "get into it." Indeed, he became much worse. His health was now visibly impaired. He had no longer any appetite for the coarse mess of repulsive stew, which is the daily food of the French soldier. Twice recently, in the course of long, trying marches, under a glaring sun, he had reeled faint and dizzy from the ranks. Pierre was seriously alarmed.

Every *sou* he received from the two old people he expended in delicacies for his brother, which he forced the latter to accept, much against his will. More he could not do. But what made matters worse and almost drove Pierre frantic, was the systematic cruelty manifested towards his brother on every possible occasion by a certain *sous-officier*, by name Bostiche. Corporal Bostiche was a brutal, coarse, and ignorant bully. To these estimable qualities he added an overweening vanity which his personal appearance was far from justifying. Stumpy and stout, with bloated complexion and awkward gait, Bostiche resembled a wine-bibbing carter rather than a soldier.

He had taken an intense dislike to Jules from the very first. No one knew exactly why. Perhaps it was the delicacy and refinement of a nature which jarred upon his own bestial conceptions of existence; perhaps it was the physical debility which he despised in the young recruit. Whatever the reason, Corporal Bostiche, by repeated acts of petty tyranny, admirably succeeded in making Jules' daily life a perfect hell upon earth.

The system unhappily prevalent in the French army gives undue latitude to creatures of the Bostiche type, and many a young soldier has been goaded to desperate breaches of discipline—so fearfully and swiftly punished—by men of that class, who are, alas! very numerous.

In the *caserne* (barracks) and out of it, on parade, at drill, and on the march, Bostiche took every possible opportunity of displaying his remarkable powers of persecution. Gratuitous insult mingled with torrents of foul abuse were Jules' habitual experiences. He bore it all with a patient resignation, a dignified silence, which was nothing short of marvellous; but he pined and drooped and grew frailer as the months rolled on.

One day, after a particularly wearisome march, when the men were lounging on the wooden benches in the mess room, Corporal Bostiche suddenly made his appearance.

"Jules Beaujeon," he called out.

Jules advanced and saluted. "*Me voilà, mon Caporal.*"

Corporal Bostiche surveyed the young soldier standing before him, with the tired and hopeless look in the grey eyes and white drawn face. His gaze travelled up and down the weary emaciated form until it finally concentrated itself on Jules' boots, one of which had split during the march and showed a glimpse of white sock from the aperture.

The Corporal curled his lips into an ugly sneer. "*Ah fainéant,*" he exclaimed, "is that the way you attend to your dress? Pig, lout that you are. You disgrace the army, you half-bred worm, you miserable cur, you ——" And so the foul insults came hurling through the air until Bostiche was out of breath. At last he shook his fist in Jules' face, and screaming out, "Three hours in the yard at once, *au complet*," left the room spluttering and cursing as he went. The attack and the reprimand were equally unjustifiable; nevertheless, Jules had to tramp round the barrack yard fully accoutred and shouldering his heavy musket for three mortal hours. When relieved, he was done up and fell fainting upon his knees.

Pierre was on sentry duty at the time and did not see his brother fall, but a kind comrade helped Jules upstairs to the sick ward, where he remained for two days.

When he came out, the animosity of Corporal Bostiche was more virulent than ever, and this combined with the natural hardships of a French soldier's life was killing Jules by inches.

Pierre saw it, and writhed in misery and impotent rage. Finally, tortured by anxiety, he took a step which he afterwards bitterly regretted. He sought out the regimental surgeon, told him everything, and asked him to see Jules, and report the matter to the captain. But the surgeon was a weak and foolish man brimming over with the exaggerated red-tapeism and love of punctilio, which is one of the characteristic ingredients of the French military school.

Pierre's impassioned appeal jarred upon the caste prejudices in which he had been reared, and which insist that rightly or wrongly the superior officer must never be held to blame. He contented himself by a cursory examination of Jules, refused against the secret dictates of his own conscience to admit the gravity of the case, and when next he happened to meet the captain, remarked scoffingly that nowadays *piou-pious* seemed made of poor stuff. This remark elicited a query from the captain, and resulted in the surgeon repeating Pierre's complaints against Bostiche. The Captain, though not hard-hearted, naturally was a bit of a martinet, and always set his face against complaints of that kind on principle. He was as tough as a piece of whipcord himself and held weaklings in profound contempt.

The Surgeon's story, flippantly told, went in at one of the gallant captain's ears and went out at the other. Somehow Bostiche got to hear of Pierre's action, and became convulsed with rage. He would willingly have laid open Pierre's cheek—as he had been known to do to a conscript before—with the cane he was wont to flourish on the drill ground. But there was that in Pierre's eyes which suggested prudence. To put it plainly, Bostiche, who, like all bullies, was a coward, held Pierre in some awe, so he let the elder brother alone, and turned the concentrated essence of his vindictiveness upon the unfortunate Jules.

His brutalities to Jules now were such that on several occasions loud murmurs had arisen from the ranks, which only infuriated Bostiche the more. Jules life had become unbearable. A hollow cough racked his wasted frame, a hectic flush burned in each hollow cheek. Jules was dying and he knew it, and went on his way uncomplaining, lest he should sadden his brother.

Pierre knew it too, and the knowledge filled him with an agony of rage and horror. It filled him with something else, an overmastering desire to kill his corporal. Struggle as he would, he could not rid himself of the idea which haunted him by day and by night.

Ah! if only the six months were over, the six months which remained before the expiration of their term of service. If only Jules could hold out until then, with the love and attention he would get at home, he might yet recover. But could he? And meantime, mean-

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time . . . . Pierre groaned aloud. He was so helpless—so helpless, cruelly helpless—and he had to disguise the real facts of the case from the old people at home. Jules wished it, and, even if they had known, they could have done nothing.

Alas! old Beaujeon and his wife were never destined to see their sons again in this world.

One day the crisis came.

A section of men were doing bayonet exercise on the fortifications behind the barracks. It was a close, oppressive morning; the air seemed charged with electricity; and Pierre, who happened to be next his brother in the ranks, observing him anxiously, saw that he looked ghastly in the extreme.

"What is it?" whispered Pierre. "What ails you?"

Jules did not reply. He appeared dazed, and went through the exercises in a mechanical way.

"*Portez armes!*" shouted Bostiche, preparatory to dismissing the men.

Jules took no notice, and continued to feebly thrust and parry, looking straight before him with dull and meaningless eyes. Bostiche grew purple with anger.

"*Sacripant!*" he yelled, but got no further, for at that moment a strange gurgling sound came from Jules' throat, a bloody froth rose to his lips, and he fell forward upon his face. Pierre darted from the ranks, and hardly knowing what he was about, stooped and half raised his brother from the ground. Jules' arms lolled helplessly apart, his eyes stared into vacancy. . . . His martyrdom was over.

"Eh; get up then, *espèce d'animal*," cried Bostiche with a horrible oath as he hurried forward cane in hand intent upon some fresh deed of tyranny.

They were the last words the corporal ever spoke. Pierre laid his brother's body reverently down, then sprang to his feet, and uttering a loud cry, before anyone could move a finger to stay him, lifted his rifle with its fixed bayonet high above his head, and with one mighty sickening thrust sent the bright blade crashing through the body of his brother's tormentor.

Bostiche flung up his arms and fell dead without a groan.

* * * * *

Two hours afterwards, a rattle of musketry might have been heard behind the barracks. The military laws of France are inflexible, and short shift is given to offenders. Pierre had paid the penalty of his action. Who will dare call it a crime?

* * * * * *

Père Beaujeon hummed softly to himself as he made his way towards the house of the Garde Champêtre, which lay just outside Arques village, beyond the railway cutting. Only a short time remained now before Pierre and Jules would be back once more. What joy! The strings of his stout old heart fairly vibrated at the thought of it, and a tear rolled slowly down the ridge of his nose, just stopping at the tip, where it hung for an instant, sparkling in the sun like a dewdrop. His *bons gosses*. How their mother would rejoice.

Full of these pleasurable anticipations, old Beaujeon reached the house of the Garde Champêtre, where he found several other leading lights of the village, all bent upon discussing the same question, viz., the depredation of the wild boars in the potato fields, and the best way of protecting the crop from their ravages. It was an important topic for the inhabitants of Arques, and long and animated was the talk. At length the meeting broke up, and all wended their way to their respective homes and breakfasts.

The Garde Champêtre, a worthy and kind-hearted soul, accompanied old Beaujeon part of the way home. General Boulanger's exploits were then the universal theme of conversation, and the papers were eagerly bought up. Presently the postman, who had just finished delivering his mails in the village, hove in sight, and, touching his hat respectfully to old Beaujeon, informed him that his paper had been handed to *la bonne mère*.

"Well, well, *au revoir donc*," exclaimed old Beaujeon to his companion; "I leave you to your papers, and I go to mine. Perhaps there will be news of my boy's doings. *Qui sait?*"

The two men parted with a cordial grip. The Garde Champêtre had an immense admiration for old Beaujeon. When he got home, he untied his bundle of papers and leisurely scanned their contents. His eyes became riveted upon a heading in large black type, which stood out from the sheet and looked portentious of evil. He read a few lines, uttered an exclamation of utter dismay, and fell into a chair.

Meanwhile, Père Beaujeon walked slowly up the street to his own dwelling, pushed up the latch, and entered.

His wife was seated in an armchair in front of the fireplace, her head bowed upon her breast, an open paper upon her knees.

"Eh, eh, you old politician!" chuckled Père Beaujeon, in high good humour. "What has the *brav' général* been up to now?"

His wife did not answer.

Startled by her silence and immobility, the old man shuffled rapidly across the room. "What is it, *ma Mie?*" he asked anxiously. There was no answer. "Asleep," he murmured; "is it possible?"

Fearful of waking her he bent low, peering into her face partially concealed in the shadow of a linen cap. A curious sound between a gasp and a groan escaped him. He placed his trembling fingers beneath her chin and lifted her face to the light. It was set in the rigidity of death.

Old Beaujeon staggered back. Every vestige of colour had left his face, and his body swayed slowly from side to side.

Presently the newspaper caught his eye. He took it up. In the middle of the sheet, printed in huge characters, he read this:

TERRIBLE TRAGEDY AT LYON BARRACKS
A SOLDIER KILLS HIS CORPORAL
EXECUTION OF THE ASSASSIN.

Slowly his eyes travelled down the column, and up again to the next, until the end was reached. He did not miss a single word.

When he had finished he laid the paper quietly down, looked out at the bright sun streaming in through the window, and then at his dead wife in her chair. His face had gone strangely rigid, and there was a curious blue look about his lips.

Suddenly, he burst into a shout of discordant laughter, a long, loud, hideous peal, and, as the door opened admitting the Garde Champêtre with the acutest sorrow written upon his countenance, Père Beaujeon with the laugh still upon his lips, came crashing to the ground, like some noble oak, felled by the axe of the woodman.

Edmund D. Morel.

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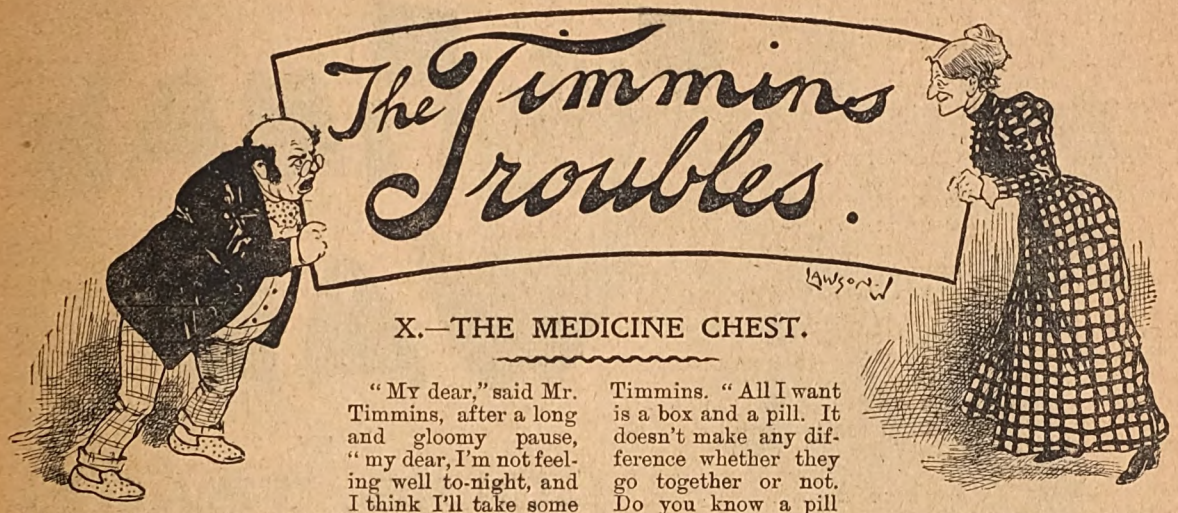

X.—THE MEDICINE CHEST.

"My dear," said Mr. Timmins, after a long and gloomy pause, "my dear, I'm not feeling well to-night, and I think I'll take some of those anti-bilious pills. That idea of yours of having a little medicine chest, with everything handy, is an excellent one, and if you can find those pills I'll take a dose."

"They are just what you need?" said Mrs. Timmins, sympathetically; "your tongue is coated and your complexion looks very yellow lately."

"I don't remember calling on you for any remarks about my complexion, Mrs. Timmins, and as for my tongue being coated, we will assume that it has also got on vest, trousers, and boots. What I asked for was pills, pills, Mrs. Timmins, not oratory."

Mrs. Timmins bustled to the cupboard, and after considerable search, found a ribbon box with one end knocked out. In it were half a dozen blue papers that belonged to the large end of a seidlitz powder, a dose and a half of cough mixture, a paper of salts, an empty arnica bottle, two lumps of sugar, four biscuits, half a lemon, a lump of camphor, a mustard leaf, and seven pill boxes without covers.

"I don't think these are the pills you want," said Mrs. Timmins, scratching in the bottom of the medicine chest. "Do you remember whether they were white, brown, or black?"

"I'm not particular about the colour," responded Mr. Timmins sardonically. "What I want is anti-bilious pills. I brought home a box and told you to put 'em away carefully. If you've lost them in that box, it isn't my fault. What I want is pills—anti-bilious pills!"

"This looks like them," said Mrs. Timmins, squashing one between her thumb aud finger, and smelling it cautiously. "Do you remember whether they were sugar-coated?"

"I do not," rejoined Mr. Timmins, "nor do I remember whether they wore stand-up collars or a top-hat. If you think I'm going to sit here like a book on heraldry, and furnish you with the antecedents of those pills, you've lost sight of our relations, Mrs. Timmins. I want to know whether you can find them or not."

"Is this one of them?" asked Mrs. Timmins, chasing a refractory pellet into a corner, and fishing it out with some misgivings. "It looks like it, and I can't think what else it's for. Suppose you take it."

"Does it say so on the cover? Does the cover say it's anti-bilious?"

"I can't find the cover," responded Mrs. Timmins helplessly. "Here's a box, will that do?"

"Oh, certainly, anything'll do for me!" shrieked Mr. Timmins. "All I want is a box and a pill. It doesn't make any difference whether they go together or not. Do you know a pill from a post-office? Can you tell the difference between a pill-box and a policeman? D'you suppose I'm going to eat one of those things without knowing whether it's a railway ticket or a corn plaster? What did ye mix 'em up for? D'you think I'm going to speculate in those pills till one hits my liver, or to take 'em in courses like a City banquet? Have I got to get out a search warrant to find those pills?"

"Suppose you put on this mustard leaf," suggested Mrs. Timmins, holding it up before him. "Mustard is the best thing in the world to excite action of the liver."

"Oh, yes, certainly, certainly," sneered Mr. Timmins. "What a head you've got for physic! If I could get you to hold a red light in your mouth and tie a pestle and mortar round your neck I'd start you for a chemist's shop. How are you going to tie a mustard plaster round my liver? Don't you know the difference between a mustard leaf and a box of pills? What did you spill 'em for? D'you think I'm going to eat mixed pills like sweets? Been trying to make a pill salad haven't you?"

"Let me think," said Mrs. Timmins, musingly. "These white ones are quinine; these brown ones are the opium; now I remember, and the black ones are the ones you want. How many make a dose?"

"None!" yelled Mr. Timmins. "D'you suppose I'm going to take those things on their colour? Think I'm going to run the chances of filling myself up with opium, just to test your eye for tints? or shut my eyes and draw a pill, as if I was playing a game of forfeits? I don't want any pills. Throw 'em out! Pitch that medicine chest out of the window! Next time I want pills, I'll——"

Mrs. Timmins went to the cupboard, put the chest away, and as she did so noticed a little box that had fallen out on the shelf.

"Here they are, dear," she said smiling, and pointing out the label to her liege.

"Oh, yes, of course!" growled Mr. Timmins, "you found 'em, didn't you? Couldn't give 'em to me at first, could you? Another time Mrs. Timmins, I want you to let things alone. Don't ever put anything more of mine in that chest; you hear me? I don't want those things to-night, because I'm not sure whether I'm billious, but when I am I want these pills where I can find 'em; you understand?"

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER LIII. (*continued*).

"STILL, it's a very old church and not a very convenient one," continued the other. "As some compensation Lord Roberts has decided to apportion the Champs Elysées into building lots, of which the rents will go entire to the French treasury."

M. Trochu looked up, and there was a wild madness in his eyes.

"I am very sorry to distress you, sir," said the Englishman gently. "I will say no more. Pray pardon me."

"No, no—the trut, the whole fatal trut—conceal nothing. Oh, *mon Dieu*, let me know ze worst!"

"I really don't think there's anything else, unless—no, stay, it is said that the Vendôme Column will be set up on the Thames Embankment, and that the British government have not quite decided whether they will erect the Arc de Triomphe in Hyde Park or in Waterloo Place."

It was too much, and the poor Frenchman, overcome, heedless of comment, and consumed with the overwhelming sense of his country's shame, broke down, great tears coursing one another down his cheeks.

Seeing this, the other Englishman interposed.

"Pardon my friend," he said, "he cannot resist a jest. All this is pure invention. Paris, the beautiful, the mother of cities, is safe, be assured, from English spoilation. And permit me, sir, to drink to the gallantry and chivalry of the great nation whom it is England's fortune to have beaten."

A marvellous change came over the Frenchman's face. He raised his glass unsteadily, drank to his tormentors and hastily left the place.

Next morning there appeared in one of the daily papers a poem from the pen of the Poet Laureate, who on this occasion at last succeeded in proving that he could leave the turgid and the commonplace, and adopt a note of sincerity and feeling. Part of it ran thus:

O England, tender mother of the fallen.
O England, scourge of tyranny and wrong,
Thy head is raised imperious 'midst the nations,
Thy step is measured to the victor's song!

For, England, though art consecrate to Freedom,
With all the passion of a zealot's vow.
The flower of Fity blossometh in thy bosom,
The star of Victory is on thy brow!

Thou whisperest thy secrets to the forests,
They bear them swiftly o'er the conquered sea,
And far-off people slumbering in their thraldom,
Awake to find themselves secure and free.

Upon the bleak and sterile lands thou treadest,
And straight the verdure springeth round thy feet.
Thy touch is magical upon the waters,
Thy hand enchanteth whatsoe'er it meet.

Beloved England, never shall the madness
Of patricidal nations fall on *thee*,
For, O my country, even are thy watchwords
Love, happiness, peace, justice, liberty!

And over all England there was rejoicing. Who shall say whether the commercial splendour of the great cities, with all its prodigality and display, was any more sincere than the bucolic thanksgiving of the rustic, who, bearing in his hands the simple product of the soil he cultured, laid it reverently upon the altar of his village church?

For he, beyond others, had suffered, if not in privations which in his low state could not be endured, at least in the lives of those beloved of him. Many a gallant son, the hope and pride of some poor country farm, lay cold and dead, or mouldered quite away in some far-off land. As of old, the soil of England had yielded up its treasure, and lay smitten beneath the cruel scourge of war.

Yet there was no repining, for these brave men had died not alone to save their country, but by their blood to secure peace for generations yet to come. There was at last finality to man's inhumanity to man. The NEWCASTLE CHRONICLE, in a leading article, observed:

"One thrilling thought remains. The cannon has spoken its last word. In all the savage incoherence of its cruel, inarticulate speech it has roared its ghastly message from century to century, writing its meaning in the writhing bodies of its victims, or tracing it along the blackened ruins of fair cities. For man deceived himself when he laughed at the childish legends of the past. He has always had his fabled monster, the insatiate, gluttonous devourer of his kind, and, with much more readiness than did ever those afflicted people of Crete, yielded up his annual tribute to its maw. But gun and cannon and bayonet and shell are silenced at last. In future ages, when new generations see in their museums these horrid implements, they will indeed wonder that the nineteenth century should have been so self-deluded as to deem itself civilised."

Solemn indeed was the meeting of Parliament when the news that all was over was formally announced in broken utterance by the Leader of the House. There was not one whose heart was not too full for words; but, by due observance, thanks were devoutly offered to Divine Providence, and a brief resolution of congratulation to Her Majesty, as representing in her person the kingdom of Great Britain, was moved and carried in silence.

An early day was set aside for National thanksgiving.

An early day was set aside for national thanksgiving. A chain of bonfires throughout the whole country was so contrived that, upon a signal raised high above the trees on Windsor Hill, all Britain was set aglow with triumphant blaze. Not a village but had its feast, and rich and poor alike joined in the joyous celebration.

But most imposing of all was the service held in St. Paul's Cathedral. Crowded beyond conception were the streets of London to see pass by the illustrious procession. The Queen, with all her family, both Houses of Parliament, the municipal bodies of London, and as many of the scaffoldings that were built upon every available space in the great building, joined in common adoration.

And to this enormous and unique gathering the eloquent Bishop of Ripon preached a touching and powerful sermon.

Dr. Boyd Carpenter is the silver-tongued orator of the Church of England. His is the gift of speech that goes to men's hearts, that appeals alike to intellect and sentiment, that convinces, not only by reason of its fervent sincerity, but its scholarly, well-ordered fluent thoughtfulness.

For this unparalleled occasion he had, with more than ordinary care, prepared an ornate discourse. It was clear and cogent in his mind, and although he felt the gravity of his task he never was more conscious of his powers and, primed with his subject than when he entered the pulpit of St. Paul's on this momentous day.

But as he gazed round upon the assembled multitude an overwhelming sense of awe held him as in a trance. He realised now that which he could not realise in the solitude of his study. It was his duty to give utterance to the first canticle of a new era, to note a fresh departure in the work of human deliverance inaugurated those long centuries ago by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, to proclaim aloud to the people that on the threshold of the twentieth century had been accomplished the destruction of the chief foe of civilisation.

The undertaking appalled him, so he knelt and solemnly asked for guidance and help.

And as he prayed, the whole of his set sermon fled from his memory. But there came to him with thrilling significance the words of Isaiah: "And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me. For He said: 'Surely they are my people.'"

Then the Bishop rose to his feet, and taking his text from these ringing verses of the prophet, he delivered an extempore sermon that created a profound sensation among his thousands of hearers, and won world-wide renown when it was read in the newspapers subsequently.

He justified and glorified the action of England and the United States, and he denounced any other course than that which they had taken as forfeiting the birthright which Providence had seen fit to bestow upon them.

Their mission was one of emancipation, and freedom could neither be won nor bestowed until the demon of militarism had been slain in his own den. In such a struggle individual interests must be ignored, and the collective good alone sought.

"Whilst the air yet throbs with the lamentations of the widow and the orphan," said the Bishop, "I hear a grand canticle of thanksgiving, swelling ever louder and more joyous, thundering towards us from the hidden paths of the future. It is the song of praise of generations yet unborn, and in that marvellous diapason the cries of present grief are wholly overborne."

Unfortunately it is impossible to afford more than the merest outline of Dr. Boyd Carpenter's unexampled panegyric of the war and its results. One passage alone may be cited as a specimen of the rest.

"This campaign has often been termed a war of patriotism," he said. "The phrase is well meant, but it does not go far enough. It was, in the widest sense, a war of belief. Once before, within the lives of the elder amongst us, have we seen such a war. Brothers fought with brothers and fathers with sons to determine, by the last dread arbitrament left to man, whether or not slavery should find a place where the English tongue was spoken and the Bible ruled the conduct of men's lives. Heaven has willed it that the victory gained then should be now welded into an eternal principle. Freedom, spoke God through his earthly ministers, shall prevail, and war, the chief agent of the oppressor, shall cease to exist. And this superb achievement was vouchsafed to the English-speaking race, for He said, 'Surely they are my people.'"

Little wonder that a sermon pulsating with tumultuous words like these, which poured on with torrential force for over forty minutes, should have electrified all who heard and all who read.

England surged and swayed with such abounding excitement during the early days after the close of the war, that there was some fear lest the national character should suffer more from the resultant hysteria than from the accumulated strain and burthen of the campaign. The public mind required an anti-climax to bring it back to the calm content of the workaday world, and relief came from a totally unexpected quarter.

Mr. W. S. Penley, the well-known comedian, thinking that people needed some relaxation after the stress of conflict, wrote to the papers to call attention to the fact that "*Charley's Aunt* was still running."

And then everybody laughed, which was a wholesome sign of returning sanity.

CHAPTER LIV.

A Message of Everlasting Peace.

During the early days after the close of the war the attention of the authorities both in England and on the Continent was devoted exclusively towards making complete arrangements for the care of the wounded and providing relief for those who had been rendered homeless and foodless by reason of the campaign.

Mr. W. S. Penley calls attention to his play.

So widespread had been the area covered by hostilities that these tasks were in themselves colossal, and might at any other period of the world's history not so utterly dominated by a succession of gigantic undertakings, have evoked the astonished plaudits of civilisation.

The fleets of the belligerents, which had so lately carried devastation and ruin to peaceful ports, were now utilised for the more kindly purpose of ferrying ample supplies of food and clothing from the vast stores accumulated in the United

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Kingdom to those points on the Continent where distress was most severe. The work of the Government in coping with this final legacy of hunger and misery left by the war was rendered easier by the fact that during the concluding stages of the campaign the ocean had in reality been a British highway.

British and American merchantmen were consequently free to come and go as they chose, and there was not the disruption in the commercial marine which must have eventuated from any other solution of the struggle save that secured by the complete and overwhelming strength of the British navy, admirably amplified as it was by the ships of the United States.

But no sooner had departmental activity been fully concentrated upon this work of succour, than the keen attention of Ministers in England and the United States was given to solving the political and social problem which now confronted all who were responsible for the future safeguarding of the world. The cabinets of St. James' and Washington sat almost continuously, and the cables between England and the United States were wholly monopolised by the long messages which were constantly passing between the chiefs of the two countries.

The very magnitude of the reforms they contemplated brought about an element of ease and clearness in outline. Local and personal considerations, which in a scheme of lesser detail would have proved troublesome in settlement were now necessarily swept completely aside with ruthless vigour. When the future of the world was at stake petty consideration affecting a minor state or an insignificant section of the community could not be entertained.

British and American merchantmen were free to come and go.

As a preliminary measure Lord Salisbury and the American President decided that a Manifesto should be drawn up and signed by the two titular heads of the English-speaking race in order that the principles vindicated and established by the war should be set forth plainly, fearlessly, and unmistakably. Such a document required much care in preparation, and it was felt that if any error were committed in text or significance the lapse should certainly be on the side of simplicity. At last it was approved by both governments and signed by Her Majesty the Queen, and by the President of the United States. It was distributed, in every language, throughout the world, and never before was document so eagerly scanned, so widely discussed or so universally approved. The full text of this remarkable Manifesto was as follows:

"An International Proclamation.

"It has been decreed by Divine Providence that in the War which was recently brought to such a speedy and satisfactory close victory should rest with the arms of England and the United States.

"The victory thus achieved was so signal and complete, and so far-reaching in its consequences, that we cannot refuse to recognise the intent of a greater power than has ever been vouchsafed to any section of the human race.

"This clear expression of the Divine Will can only be interpreted in one way. War, with the countless miseries that come in its train, must forthwith cease, and it is by the medium of the most widespread conflict ever witnessed in the history of the world, that Providence has seen fit in its inscrutable wisdom to make manifest its commands.

"Great Britain and the United States are but the instruments chosen to accomplish the task. To their hands was committed the cause of suffering humanity, and as they did not shrink from their duty in the hour of difficulty and danger, so now they will not draw back from the undertaking until the peace of the world is placed upon a firm and lasting basis. We therefore, acting on behalf of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the United States of America, hereby state our unalterable resolves:

"1st. That disputes between civilised nations shall henceforth be determined by a tribunal of International Arbitration, the constitution and powers of which shall be hereafter decided.

"2nd. That no civilised nation shall be permitted to organise or maintain any naval or military armed force save in such limited degree as may be required for the preservation of law and order within the bounderies of the State. As a necessary consequence, all existing fortifications and accumulated munitions of war shall in due course be dismantled and destroyed.

"3rd. That England and the United States shall equip and maintain a sufficient armed force both by sea and land for the purpose of giving effect to the principles herein enunciated, such armed force being kept in readiness for as long a period as the rulers of those countries shall deem fit and necessary to achieve this object.

"4th. That in the event of any uncivilised state threatening the peace of the world the representatives of Europe and America shall collectively determine and provide the means whereby such danger may be averted or satisfactorily met.

"5th. That an International Congress shall in due course assemble in London, at which the nations of Europe and the great powers of the East shall be represented, to determine the best manner whereby the requirements of this decree shall be brought into operation, the Governments of England and the United States reserving to themselves the right to control and direct the deliberations of such Congress.

"6th. The first duty which shall call for the attention of this International Congress will be the most effective method of securing general disarmament, compatible with considerations of expediency, as vast numbers of armed men must not be thrown too quickly into civil life. The disruption which would ensue to all industrial operations from too great precipitancy in such a step will thus be avoided.

"7th. The Congress shall next devote itself to the consideration of permanent boundaries between States and the adjustment of Colonial areas, with due respect to existing possessions, and the development of unsettled localities adjoining thereto.

"8th. Notwithstanding the unprovoked nature of the attack made upon the United Kingdom, and despite the enormous sacrifices cheerfully borne by the peoples of Great Britain and the United States, it has been resolved that no indemnity shall be claimed from the assailants. We feel that the French, German, and Russian nations, with whom we have no quarrel, were led into this disastrous war by the short-sighted ambition of their rulers, and in refusing to inflict grievous financial burdens upon them in order to pay the entire costs of the struggle we are giving the best possible guarantee of the motive which dominates our action, namely, to secure lasting peace and happiness for the inhabitants of the world.

"9th. There will be no interference with the internal affairs of States, or the methods of government adopted, so long as constitutional means alone are followed for their settlement. But the use of force will not be permitted under any circumstances whatever, save as before stated, for the preservation of law and order at the hands of the properly constituted authorities.

"We humbly pray the blessing of Providence upon our designs, and we trust that the united peoples of Europe will

co-operate with us in the effort to bring them to a successful and irrevocable consummation."

The effect produced on the Continent by this proclamation was stupendous.

Not only did the magnificent scope of the proposals made by the two governments appeal to the imagination of every man who cared for the progress of the human race, and the triumph of collectivism, but the magnanimity of England and America in refusing to fine the other belligerents, evoked the keenest gratitude from the already too heavily taxed agricultural and commercial classes in central Europe.

There was joy that night in the cafes.

Naturally enough, in some quarters there was a disposition to resent the masterful tone adopted by the victors.

But behind the dignified and convincing language of the proclamation there stood the terrific power of those who spoke. It was computed that when Paris fell, no less than twelve millions of Anglo-Saxons were armed for the struggle and cynically prepared to prosecute it to the bitter end.

To those nations of Europe who had not participated in the war the proclamation came first as a thunderbolt. But Austria, and Italy, and Spain, not to mention the less powerful kingdoms of the north, quickly saw that the project afforded relief to them as well as to the stricken peoples of France, Germany, and Russia.

In the Far East China hailed the glad tidings which placed the restless Japanese under the control of a mightier power than hers, and if the rulers of Turkey saw a definite end to a government of rapine and disorder, the oppressed nations of the Levant rejoiced in the certainty that the period of deliverance was at hand.

The German Emperor threw himself with heart and soul into the work of regeneration. He had learnt, by sad experience, that the greatness of Germany depended not upon her militarism but upon the commercial and industrial adaptability of her song and he now devoted his superabundant energies to the mastering of the technical and mechanical details of manufacturing enterprises with as much keenness as he had formerly displayed in qualifying himself to lead armies and fleets into action.

By a stroke of genius M. Bourgeois pacified Paris.

When the proclamation was read in the French Chamber the assembled deputies were dumb with amazement at its extraordinary conclusions.

The Premier was quick to note the excitable feelings under which the House laboured, and he ventured upon an anti-climax which proved to be a greater *coup* than he could have anticipated in his most sanguine moments.

"You have heard the decisions arrived at by England and the United States," he said, speaking with calm deliberation. "To me they seem both reasonable and temperate. But they cannot now be discussed in their entirety. At this moment I would beg to draw the attention of honourable deputies to the fact that if the Paris Exhibition of 1900 is to be as successful as we would desire, not another instant must be lost in pushing forward the too long suspended preparations."

The Premier's suggestion buzzed quickly through the Chamber and thence into the city and the provinces.

Its philosophy was undoubted and acceptable. France had had enough of war. Let her revert to her vastly more pleasing *rôle* as supplying the playground of the world. There was joy that night in the cafés, and hope in the Magasin du Louvre.

In bestowing honours and rewards upon the officers and men of the army and navy who had served the cause of England so well Her Majesty the Queen was called upon to face a task as formidable in extent as it was gratifying in nature.

In the first instance a special message was forwarded through the American President to the Senate and House of Representatives for permission to be accorded to her Majesty to suitably decorate the principal officers of the American army and navy. The required sanction was as cordially given as it was graciously demanded, and in the result Admiral Mahan and General Smithson received the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, whilst among other recipients of the Royal Victorian Order figured the name of Colonel W. J. Ritchie.

It was not until the legitimate claims of all the principal American officers had been satisfied that her Majesty preferred to the Government of the United States the most important request of all. This was no less than a most warmly-worded expression of her wish that legislative sanction might be given to the acceptance of the Knighthood of the Garter by the President, the Vice-President, and the Secretary of State for War. Such an unexampled departure from precedent deeply impressed the public mind both in England and across the Atlantic, for even democratic America felt that the prompt acceptance by the House of Representatives of the honour proposed to be conferred upon the chief citizens of the United States was in itself a testimony of the high regard in which the time-honoured and most distinguished institution of the English Court was held by every member of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Nor were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and other colonies forgotten in the least degree. Not only were their political leaders singled out for marks of royal appreciation, but the British Prime Minister intimated that in due course government grants would be made towards recouping all ports which had suffered loss or damage by reason of unforeseen attacks by the allied fleets.

In dealing with the British army and navy, Her Majesty's advisers were compelled, for obvious reasons, to restrict the range of definite reward. Where every officer and man had so nobly done his duty it was impossible, save in very isolated cases, to select individuals for distinction. Of course, in the case of generals who commanded in the field this restrictive rule was necessarily departed from.

Lord Wolseley's services as Commander-in-Chief of the entire army was recognised by a dukedom, whilst Lord Roberts, Sir George White, and Sir Evelyn Wood each became an earl. A similar honour was bestowed upon Sir Nowell Salmon, Sir Beauchamp Seymour and Sir Edward Freemantle, whilst Lord Charles Beresford became a marquis in his own right.

Springing to his feet he cried: "—

Baronetcies and knighthoods were distributed with a free hand to divisional and fleet commanders, and a bonus of six months' pay was given to every officer and man who had served in the field. A similar donation was bestowed upon the relatives of all who were killed in action or died from disease whilst under arms.

But it was generally felt that the action of the Government in the latter respect, although generous enough in

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view of the tremendous financial responsibilities entailed by the war, did not march with full measure of public sentiment. In England no less than in the United States there was a deep conviction that private generosity should supplement the relief given by the State to soldiers who had been disabled for life by their wounds and to the widows and orphans who had lost their breadwinners owing to the vicissitudes of the campaign.

For some time people were at a loss to know how to reconcile their wishes with reasonable performance, but the question was solved in a curious and eminently satisfactory manner.

The Baroness Burdett-Coutts had given a small and extremely select supper party at her residence, No. 153, Piccadilly. This gathering was destined to become famous in history.

The majority of the guests were millionaires, and, curiously enough, the somewhat limited section of humanity which comprises this fortunate class was represented to an unusually large extent. There were present not only the chief financial magnets of London and South Africa, but it happened that among the guests were four of the richest citizens of the United States.

The conversation during one portion of the proceedings turned upon the need there was for adequate provision being made for the humble sufferers from the war, and the opinion was unanimously expressed that the decision of the Government although reasonable from the point of view of Ministers responsible for taxation, yet in no way met the urgent demands of maimed men and helpless women and children. The noble and generous minded lady who presided at the table was very emphatic in expressing the view that at such a time the rich should carefully consider the real scope of the obligations imposed upon them by their wealth.

"We ought to realise," she said, "that were it not for the splendid heroism and absolute self-abandonment displayed by even the poorest members of the community, we should not now be in possession of our property under the peaceful security of a strong and impartial Government. We owe all that we have in the world to the men who have given their lives in defence of England, and I, for one, am prepared to mark my sense of what they have done by a donation towards some fund to alleviate the wants of those who are in need, and such donation will, by reason of its amount, be some testimony of the sincerity of my conviction. I may tell you," she continued, looking round at the assembled company, "that I have already given orders for the realisation of securities worth a million sterling, which sum I propose to hand over to such public committee as may be entrusted with the distribution of relief upon the most popular basis."

A hum of admiring appreciation passed round the table, and the excitement grew when Messrs. Barnato Bros. and J. B. Robinson announced their intention of following the precedent established by the philanthropic Baroness.

The Americans present looked at each other with growing eagerness in their faces, and at last Mr. John D. Rockefeller drily remarked to his compatriots: "I think it's about time we raised them a few."

Springing to his feet he cried: "I like your idea, and it ought to go well in the States. Just to give it a shove off I put up two millions."

"Dollars or pounds?" shouted a voice from the end of the table.

"Pounds of course," he replied. "We are not talking silver here to-night."

Thus the friendly rivalry sped, until in that room alone England had contributed eleven millions sterling and America nine millions to the Patriotic Fund which was shortly opened for the benefit of the necessitous.

The Times and the other chief newspapers of the United Kingdom warmly took up the idea, and the country contributed to an unprecedented extent. So fast and furious was the enthusiasm that Parliament itself felt constrained to direct and control the movement. A strong committee of both houses was nominated to join the representatives of the army and navy for the purpose of efficiently administering the fund, and by its effectual distribution a vast amount of misery and privation was averted.

This great work of succour and alleviation progressed steadily and contemporaneously side by side with the orderly progress now being made by the nations of Europe towards political and social regeneration.

By this time the Congress of London met for the purpose of entering upon a solemn, anxious, and protracted consideration of the many important questions raised by the joint proclamation of the Queen and the American President, the evil passions engendered by the war were already becoming quietly extinguished, and truly seemed that the world was at last about to enter upon a period of rest and peace and mutual helpfulness.

(To be concluded next week.)

Maud: "Do you believe that all the world loves a lover?"
Jack: "No; not since I met your father."

Watts: "Seems to have been some trouble over at Wickwire's house."

Potts: "Well, yes. His wife told him to advertise for a parlour maid and he goes and puts in the ad., 'blonde preferred.'"

"We are selling these goods," said the counter-jumper, "at a positive loss. Practically, we are giving them away."

"Then," said the lady with the haughty demeanour, "I, must decline to purchase. I cannot accept gifts from a shopkeeper."

A man who had saved the life of a daughter of a millionaire received 8s. 6d. from the grateful parent. He was so overcome with the magnificent bounty that he paid out every penny of it to seventeen organ grinders to simultaneously serenade his benefactor.

They attach a good deal of importance in American society to titles. On one occasion there was a young English nobleman figuring at Washington. He had not much brains, but a vast number of titles, which, in the eyes of the envious ladies, covered a multitude of sins. Several of them were in debate, going over the list. "He is Lord Viscount so-and-so, Baron of such a country," etc.

"My fair friends," exclaimed the gallant Lieutenant N., "one of his titles you appear to have forgotten."

"Ah," exclaimed they, "what is that?"

"He is Barren of Intellect," was the reply.

The following is a case to which the word "disillusion" might well be applied. Not long ago a servant living in Goole gave notice of her intention to leave, informing her mistress that she was about to be married. As the time drew near she addressed her mistress thus:

"Please, mum, have you got a girl yet?"

"No, Mary, why do you ask?"

"Because if you haven't I should like to stay."

"What? I thought you were going to marry the chimney sweep?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," replied Mary, hesitating, and blushing a little, "but when I saw him with his face washed I felt I couldn't love him."

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AIDS TO ACCURACY.

J. D.—An instance of the defacement of coins to insult a monarch occurred in Saxony when that country was conquered by Frederick the Great. He imposed the Prussian coinage upon the vanquished in order to stamp out the last vestige of independence. The Saxons altered the wording on some of the pieces from *Ein Reichs-thalen*, a Royal dollar, to *Ein Reich-sthal*, the stealing of a kingdom. They had to pay dearly for their gibe in the end.

L. E. L.—The first railway in Sweden was opened in 1855.

G.—Frog-hunting is now prohibited by law in Belgium. The Belgian hunters, however, continue their amphibious occupation in Holland, and from the Sas-van-Gent have recently sent in one half-day as many as 20,000 frogs' legs on ice to Paris. These delicacies fetch between from twopence to fourpence apiece, and some of the hunters find the calling very remunerative.

H. M.—The sword of honour recently presented by the Corporation of London to Lord Kitchener, is the forty-third bestowed by that body on naval and military commanders. The first was given to Lord St. Vincent just over a hundred years ago. He had been accorded the freedom of the City, and the Corporation did not know how to do him further honour; someone suggested a sword, and this has become a kind of custom. Lord Alcester (Sir Beauchamp Seymour) was the last to receive a sword of honour.

L. S. D.—There are 40,000 miners at work in the Siberian gold mines. The grains of Siberian gold are, on the average, larger than those found in any other part of the world.

F. B.—It is highly probable that dancing is the oldest form of amusement. Leaping and jumping about is the most natural way of disposing of superfluous energy and of expressing our feelings, as may be observed in children, and the earliest records show that dancing was a common form of amusement. No doubt the early form of it was mere capering about, but this does not affect the question. Many dancers of the present day do nothing more than caper about the ballroom.

H. G.—The greatest amount of booty ever obtained by an army as the result of a single battle was that captured by Nadir Shah at the sack of Delhi, in 1733. Authorities differ as to the exact value of the treasure, which included the famous Koh-i-noor diamond, but the most modest computation is fifteen millions sterling.

A. R. N.—Astronomical instruments of glass were used by the Chinese four thousand years ago. One theory advanced in explanation of the erection of the Great Pyramid of Egypt is that it was intended to be used as an astronomical observatory as well as a tomb.

M. A. B.—Three-tenths of the earnings of a Belgian convict are given to him on the expiration of his term of imprisonment. Some of them thus save more money in jail than they have ever saved before.

L. G. asks if there are any plants or vegetable growths that emit light. ——It is difficult to determine with accuracy. Certain fungi shine with a brilliant phosphorescence, and some authorities on botany assert that various bright-coloured flowers like the marigold emit light towards evening. There is a difference of opinion about the latter point. One Swedish botanist says the light of the marigold is electrical; other botanists declare that it is an optical illusion.

Z.—The Sultan of Morocco keeps a large number of live lions about his premises, and in the evening these animals are let loose in the courtyards of the palace to act as guards to the royal harem.

G. N.—Nearly £300,000 worth of articles are pawned in London weekly.

P.—There are two violet farms in the United States, both managed entirely by women.

DRESS.—The universal custom among women of dressing in expensive clothes, regardless of comfort, is due partly to the love of display, no doubt, but it is looked upon by men of science as a survival of olden times, when the woman was the property of the man, and her dress was used as a means of displaying his wealth. In the present day, they say, the Society dame clothes herself in accordance with the social standing of her husband; she must "maintain her position," and comfort, which is the real function of dress, takes a back seat. This is certainly very much like the usage of patriarchal times.

P.—In most of the countries of Europe there are more restrictions on the sale of "patent medicines" than in the United Kingdom, where, in fact, there is very little restraint. In Armenia no medicines prepared by an occult art can be legally sold.

EAT.—Larvae or catapillars eat more in one day in proportion to their size than any other creatures. Many caterpillars consume twice their own weight of food in twenty-four hours. The larva of the flesh-fly increases its weight two hundred times during the first twenty-hours of its existence.

BELL.—The bell bird is so called because its note is as loud and as clear as a bell. It is found in South America and Africa. An eminent naturalist has stated that it can be heard at a distance of three miles.

SHELL.—Some authorities declare that explosive shells were first introduced as a factor in naval warfare in 1853, although their utility was recognised fifty years previously. This is in direct conflict with the record of the battle of Liman in 1788, when several Turkish battleships were destroyed by the shells fired from "big guns"—thirty-six and forty-eight pounders.

M.—When a criminal is arrested in Morocco he has to pay the cost of arresting him, if he possesses anything that can be realised. If not, he usually has a little added to his punishment.

G.—A neat brush is attached to the tail of the glow-worm for the purpose of keeping clean that part of the worm from which the light proceeds, and thus preserving the brightness of the light.

WAR.—A Polish statesman has estimated that the daily cost of a war in which the five Great Powers of Europe—Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria and Russia—were engaged, would be rather more than four millions sterling.

A. L.—The custom about which you ask prevails on the death of a prince of the royal family of Austria. His horse, covered with a black cloth, follows the funeral, limping painfully. The lameness is caused by driving a nail through one shoe, and is intended to typify the animal's sorrow.

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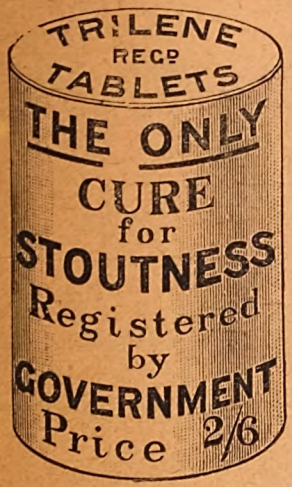
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

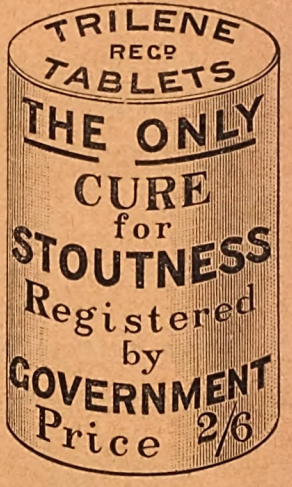
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began our Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

MR. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

MRS. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 12st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 530. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 25TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

THE MONARCH RECORD REDUCTION SALE.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the nations of the earth.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" HOUSEHOLD

Sale Price **2/-** **HEARTHRUGS** Regd.

In REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction.

SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5/9; Six for 11/3; Twelve for 22/-

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

Gigantic Sale of the "Queen's Royal" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern

CARPETS Regd. Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations.

ADMITTEDLY THE CHEAPEST CARPET IN THE WORLD.

Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Size.	Each.		Size.	Each.
6ft. by 6ft.	4s. 11d.	REDUCED	9ft. by 13½ft.	16s. 6d.
6ft. by 7½ft.	6s. 0d.	SALE	10½ft. by 12ft.	18s. 0d.
6ft. by 9 t.	7s. 6d.	PRICE.	12ft. by 12ft.	21s. 0d.
8ft. by 9ft.	9s. 0d.		9ft. by 15ft.	19s. 6d.
6ft. by 12ft.	1 s. 6d.		12ft. by 13½ft.	22s. 0d.
9ft. by 9ft.	11s. 0d.		12ft. by 15ft.	25s. 6d.
6ft. by 10½ft.	13s. 6d.		12ft. by 18ft.	30s. 0d.
9ft. by 12ft.	15s. 0d.		12ft. by 21ft.	35s 6d.

Ramsden, Charlbury, 4/3/98.

Lady HICKS BEACH writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her one of their 'Queen's Royal' Carpets, 9ft. by 9ft., 11s.? Cheque enclosed. The other parcel received safely, and I am pleased with it."

To readers of "Short Stories," on receipt of Postal Order or stamps, value 4s. 6d. (Regd.), we will send you *the Largest Genuine Reversible Carpet in Brussels Pattern, with Rug*, ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address, on receipt of amount. Suitable for Drawing Room, Dining Room, Bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember, these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices. *Cut this out.*

SPECIAL OFFER.—2 Carpets and 2 Rugs, 8s.

Illustrated Bargain Catalogue of Carpets, Hearthrugs, Table Linen, Curtains, etc., Post Free, if mentioning SHORT STORIES (25/2/99) when writing.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE "PRUDENTIAL"

TURKEY DESIGN CARPETS.

(Regd.) Reversible, woven throughout, bordered, richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. These goods cannot be distinguished from Real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

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6ft. by 6ft.	2s. 11d.	REDUCED	9ft. by 15ft.	12s. 6d.
6ft. by 7½ft.	3s. 11d.	SALE	10½ft. by 12ft.	11s. 6d.
6ft. by 9ft.	4s. 6d.	PRICE.	12ft. by 12ft.	12s. 9d.
7½ft. by 9ft.	5s. 11d.		12ft. by 13½ft.	14s. 6d.
9ft. by 9ft.	7s. 6d		12ft. by 15ft.	15s. 9d.
9ft. by 10½ft.	8s. 6d.		12ft. by 18ft.	19s. 6d.
9ft. by 12ft.	9s. 6d.		12ft. by 21ft.	22s. 6d.

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred. A "Reversible" Prudential Hearthrug (Regd.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2yd. long and 1yd. wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d., or 6 for 8s., or 12 for 15s. 6d., sterling value.

N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at Lowest Rates. Illustrated Lists Post Free. Telegraphic Address—"ECLIPSE, LEEDS." Cheques and P.O's payable to

F. HODGSON & SON,

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WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

DON'T CUT OFF YOUR NOSE

to spite your face. You may want it—the nose we mean. To act spitefully at any time, either to yourself or others, is mean and contemptible. We heard of a girl the other day who quarrelled with her lover, and married a man she did not like, to spite him (her lover). Years have passed. She has regretted it every day since, and will do to the end of the chapter. But the game is not worth the candle. To act rashly is a losing game. Think calmly, without prejudice, and act promptly. When you read Page Woodcock's advertisements recommended for the cure of Indigestion, Wind on the Stomach, Biliousness, Liver Complaints, &c., don't say "Bosh," but try them, then talk, and then you'll tell a tale worth hearing.

Mr. W. H. Parsons, of 4 Crescent Road, Clapham, S.W., June, 1898, writes: "I have been a great sufferer from INDIGESTION, &c. Have tried a great many remedies, but found none to equal your WIND PILLS, which have worked magic upon me. Trusting that many others may find the boon of them. You may make what use you like of this. It is a fact!"

All sufferers from Indigestion, Liver Complaints, Wind on the Stomach, Costiveness, Sick Headache, Nervous Debility, Palpitation of the Heart, Biliousness, &c., should avail themselves of this most excellent Medicine.

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills, being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, and Mild and Tonic in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

All Medicine Vendors at 1/1½ and 2/9. Post free for price by Page Woodcock, Lincoln.

Be particular that you ask for "Page Woodcock's Wind Pills," and see that you get no other.

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GOOD! ITS MASON'S

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY

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MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3; three assorted 1/8.

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Manufacturers—

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

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Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

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THE John Noble

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promptly sent by Parcel Post, safely packed, direct from the Largest Firm of Costumiers in the World, and made to look smart and yield faithful service.

TRIMMED HAT, as sketch, **5/11.** Carriage 4d.

Model 984.

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Stylish blouse bodice and neat skirt. Bodice lined through, and made with prettily gathered front and shaped belt, *as sketch*. Lengths and Prices: **6/11**

35 38 42 46 in. } Carriage
6/11 7/11 8/11 9/11 ea. } 5d. extra.

Lengths are from top of neck-band to bottom of skirt in front.

PRETTY MAID'S COSTUME Model 1016.

These Costumes are supplied in the following two good durable Cloths:
I. **John Noble Cheviot Serge**, weighty and weather-resisting.
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Any other size can be specially made to measure 1/6 extra.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

SHORT STORIES

No. 530. For the Week ending February 25th, 1899. One Penny.

The Death Model.

He was the handsomest man among the men who thronged the Artists' Quarter. But who he was, or where he came from, no one knew.

He painted exquisite pictures, which sold without the least difficulty.

We soon grew to like the fair-haired giant. He was so kindly courteous, so truly a gentleman. He seldom smiled, and his eyes, of deepest violet, always had a woeful expression in their depths.

That there was something strange about him, we realised from the first. At times he was the life of the party, and anon plunged into a gloom from which nothing could arouse him. At such times he would lock himself in his studio, and no word or entreaty from any of us could call him forth till the fit passed.

After these long seclusions he would come among us pale and enfeebled, and with an indefinable something about him which impressed us all, but to which none gave expression save the irrepressible Martin.

"Ugh!" he said one day with a shiver, "you look as if you had been communing with the dead."

The handsome face of Valette underwent a strange change as he replied, in his low, sweet voice:

"Would communing with the dead leave its imprint upon a man's face?"

"Unquestionably!"

Valette sighed deeply and turned away.

In the course of the next six months there were to be three distinct art exhibitions, and nearly every occupant of the Quarter was engaged upon a picture which he fondly hoped would secure the prize, or at least be hung. Such a rushing about for models, such grumbling and fault-finding you never heard of.

Valette, however, maintained his usual quietness, and when questioned as to his success in model hunting, assured us he had secured one in every way satisfactory. Yet my studio was right opposite his, and, watch as closely as I might, I never caught a glimpse of any model coming or going.

My own picture was a scene where a young and lovely wife was pleading for the life of her husband, who had been sentenced to death. Everything was completed save the face of the pleader, and I was unable to find any model capable of assuming the expression I was desirous of securing.

One day while lounging in Valette's room I incidentally mentioned my difficulty. Lifting the lid of a great desk he handed me a square of canvas.

"Will that be of any use?" was all he said.

I uttered an involuntary cry of delight.

The picture was painted with masterly skill, and represented a woman kneeling, with clasped hands and upturned face, at the foot of a wreathed-crowned cross.

But the woman's face made one give small heed to the details of the picture. Such agonised entreaty, such almost hopeless despair in the dark eyes; my own involuntarily filled with tears as I gazed.

I saw Valette was regarding me closely, as I raised my eyes from the picture and caught the same look of hopeless sadness in his own beautiful eyes ere he turned them away.

"You are welcome to make use of the face," and he began painting as if nothing had happened.

After that we grew to be close friends. Time sped on. One after another the men of our set finished their pictures and sent them in to the committees. Some were raised to the seventh heaven by a speedy acceptance, while others were plunged into deepest despair by a rejection.

I was one of the fortunate, and Valette informed me that all three of his were hung. He had not allowed even me to see them, and I was curiously anxious for the time to come when I could do so.

I was early upon opening day, but as I examined picture after picture, I found nothing to especially interest me until I heard little Martin's voice exclaim:

"Heavens! what a subject!"

I quickly made my way to his side, and as I saw what he was gazing upon, I mentally echoed his words.

It was a large picture of superb and gorgeous colouring. The background was a luxuriant growth of tropical verdure. To the right the shining waves rolled in upon the beach of shimmering white sand. But the figure occupying the foreground subordinated all these.

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It was the form of a superbly beautiful woman struggling in the folds of an immense serpent.

One instantly comprehended the futility of the effort she was making, but every sinew in one's body tightened in sympathy. Both white hands clutched at the monster's throat, and the loathing horror upon her face told how fully she realised what must be her doom. Two folds of the gleaming body encircled her waist and limbs, and the terrible head, with distended jaws and diamond bright eyes, gradually nearing her face.

"Ugh! Whatever possesses Valette to paint such a picture? It is so horribly realistic," grumbled Martin. "See, Webster, the woman's face and form have already the hue of the dead."

It was so, and I shivered as I had done on gazing upon a corpse a few days before.

I did not ask my friend how he knew this was Valette's picture, for there was no mark on it. As I gazed, the conviction grew upon me that it was, and as I at length tore myself away I re-echoed Martin's words; "Whatever possessed Valette to paint such horrible things?"

I returned every day to gaze upon it, and it indeed seemed as if decay had fastened upon the rounded limbs and beautiful face, so perfectly was the hue of death depicted.

I said nothing to Valette upon the subject, however, but waited with impatience for the opening of the next month's exhibit.

This time it did not need Martin to point out Valette's work, though as before there was no mark by which to identify it.

A wide stretch of angry, tossing sea, extending on all sides to a dull sodden sky, no living object visible, but in the foreground the floating form of a woman, her dead face with half-closed eyes, gleaming ghastly white through the semi-gloom. Her delicate, rounded limbs were half visible through the enshrouding waters, and they wore the same terrible hue of death we had shuddered over in the former picture.

The colouring of every feature of the scene was so natural, the outlines so perfect, that one could almost hear the swish of the waves, and catch the undulating motion of the dead.

I went away more dissatisfied than ever. Who was Valette's model? And how had he caught the hue of death which others found so impossible to master?

At last the grand exhibition opened, and I only paused to give a self-congratulatory nod as I saw what an advantageous light had been given my own picture, in hurrying on to find Valette's masterpiece.

Worse and worse! Ugh! I shudder at the remembrance even at this late date, but among all that immense collection of pictures, there was none before which the crowd so persistently lingered.

It was a second sea scene. Under a glaring tropical sky, where the sun gleamed like a ball of fire, floated a raft, upon a sea whose waves were copper-hued and scorching. Upon the raft were three human forms. One, a woman so grandly proportioned, so wondrously beautiful, that you instinctively envied death her possession.

She clasped a babe lovingly to her bared breast, as is the mother love had sought even in death to prolong the feeble life. The other form was that of a man, as superbly formed and proportioned as that of the woman. Death had claimed them all, as was proved by their glassy eyes and upturned faces, helpless under the burning sun. Here again was the greyish pallor, horribly suggestive of decay.

As I gazed fascinated by the very horror of the scene, a messenger put a note in my hand. It was from Valette, urging me to come to him at once, as he was ill. I instantly left the building, nor paused until I stood by his bedside.

A Sister of Charity and an old greybeard of a doctor were in attendance. It was Roman fever, and would probably prove fatal, was the verdict.

Valette bore the sentence bravely, and then requested to be left alone with me.

"I shall be delirious in a moment," he said, grasping my hand eagerly, "so must talk fast.

"Behind yon curtain you will find a large box of which this is the key," pushing one into my hand; "take one look at its contents, and then see it laid in consecrated ground. When I am dead lay me beside it. Keep my secret—promise—promise!"

The last words came gaspingly, and ere I could reply he sank into unconsciousness.

I hastily recalled the attendants, then, with a pitying glance at the doomed man, lifted the curtain behind which I had never seen, notwithstanding my intimacy with Valette.

There was nothing remarkable in the sight, save the box of which he had spoken. It was large, and stood upright against the wall, where the afternoon light streamed full upon it.

Inserting the key in the lock, I quickly swung open the door. A cry of horror and fear escaped me as its contents were thus revealed.

Its sides were padded, and lined with white satin and costly lace. In the centre, in a kneeling posture, was the half clothed form of a dead woman. The original of all his horrible pictures, I saw at once; for here was the superb limbs and wondrous beauty. Here was the model, about whom we had made so many conjectures.

The embalmer's work had been skilfully done, but an unmistakeable charnel house odour came to my nostrils, and I hastened to close and lock the door, destined never to be re-opened.

I lost no time in seeing the fearful thing underground, although it was not accomplished without some risk and a generous use of gold.

I then devoted myself to Valette's care, and had the satisfaction of seeing him recover. Slowly, it is true, and with many relapses, but one day, six months later, we left Rome together on a long journey round the world, during which he recovered health and spirits. The love he gave me fully repaid me for all the sacrifices I had made in order to be with him.

It was many months ere the subject of his model was mentioned between us, but one day, in the wilds of a Brazilian forest, he told me a strange story of wrong-doing and sorrow.

He had loved the beautiful woman whose form I had laid away, but she became the wife of another.

In life he could not possess her, but when death laid his icy hand on her, he had stolen her body away, and lived in its presence for months, half mad, and wholly heart-broken.

He shuddered at the remembrance of those fearful months, wondering now, in his sanity, how he could ever have been possessed of such morbid madness, and he has never since looked upon those terrible pictures.

Cyril Newland.

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A Man of the Past.

There is no doubt that Miles Otway was contradictory by nature. His best friends said he was unmanageable unless you began at the wrong end with him. Then perhaps, he would argue you—and himself—round to the right. Right was his purpose, but he must fight his way to it; he must first discover and demolish the wrong.

At parish meetings, and in all affairs of general interest, he was sure to be in the opposition, so they called him, "Old Per Contra."

He had been engaged during his youth to a girl, who had said to him more than once, "Miles you are the most opposite-sided person I ever met." A time came at last, when, in answer to some utter unreasonableness, it had been, "I don't think, Miles, we had better risk it, after all."

Then he remonstrated with all the joined power of his habitual combativeness and his truest feeling; but to no purpose. Marion West had come, reluctantly, to mean it. The engagement came to an end. Miles was then twenty-seven; Marion nineteen. Four years later she married Doctor Fletcher, and went with him to his home. Miles never married. In Marion's rare visits home he was careful not to meet her.

Thrown back on himself, Miles grew bitter against the world. He denounced much, tolerated little, excused nothing. Just to a fault, by that fault he failed of justice, even to himself.

One person only came near him; that one hardly knew how near. Their life so managed itself that neither of them guessed or betrayed the undemonstrated depth of mutual regard. And yet it was plain to any third person that old Miles and young Sam had no life apart from each other. Nobody dare hint of "Old Per Contra" in Sam Otway's hearing; nobody dare speak slight of Sam to his Uncle Miles.

Since the young man was sixteen they had lived together in the old Otway's house on the side of Thornton East Hill. All else of the immediate family, in both generations, had passed onward, leaving place and memory to these nearest kin. Miles Otway held in possession the greater part of the ancestral inheritance, which was large. Sam had what remained of his father's share after considerable spending and losing, and this residue was not large. Everybody thought, of course, that he would ultimately have the whole. This, which would seem a strong bond of interest, was really between the two a separating wedge.

The old man was out of touch with the present.

"Whatever you do, Sam, don't marry a girl of the period," he said one day.

"A girl of which period shall I marry?" Sam asked. "I seem to have been born into this one myself."

"Do the best you can in it, then. There may be an exception to be found."

"Not in a little old-fashioned bonnet, and innocent of Browning, or Paderewski, or the higher mathematics, or associated charities, Uncle Miles. That girl is gone. May not these that have come be just as nice and sweet, in spite of their dress and doing? They only take things where they find them, as the others did before."

"Can't be as nice," grumbled his uncle. "It's all demoralising. The fittest hasn't survived. Folly has run to seed; there was always plenty of it; now the crop's pretty much weeds."

"You hold aloof, Uncle; you don't know."

"Don't mean to know. I don't belong to the end of the century."

The man who had lost his past and rejected his present, threw down the newspaper with which he daily aggravated himself, got up and walked away.

The unforeseen occurred. Marion Fletcher returned to Thornton a widow. Her father and mother had died; the house in Thornton belonged to her. Her income was modest; it would do more, and in better accordance with her wishes, here.

With her came her daughter Rose, and a little grandson just out of babyhood, the child of a daughter who had died.

In a straight line, had the hill been tunnelled, her house and Miles' would have been scarcely a furlong apart; but there are few straight lines in the world—it was up hill and down hill between them. Miles, in his daily constitutionals, never walked that road now. The younger man soon found the way,

Rose Fletcher was eighteen and pretty; Sam was in the flush of twenty-five, and soon very much in love. He knew nothing about the old story, a part of which was repeating itself.

Mrs. Fletcher's deep, shaded verandah, the one grand adjunct of her unpretentious house, was delightful on a summer evening. It came to pass that many a time when Uncle Miles, smoking his solitary pipe, paced up and down his long garden walk, Sam was behind the honeysuckle trellis of the Fletcher's house, enjoying the companionship, and falling under the special charm which had never come to him before.

Mrs. Fletcher began to see what was impending with a dread, and yet a secret hope. It might bring trouble; it might result in beautiful replacement. A new, young love might redeem the bitterness in which the old had ended, and draw near in a late peace of friendship the lives so long estranged.

Marion Fletcher had loved her husband; and she cherished his memory.

In the years since Gilbert Fletcher died, it had never entered her thoughts that any change could be imagined for her from her single absolute loyalty. It did not invade her conciousness now. She was free of herself; she could frankly wish to be forgiven and better understood by Miles Otway; to change his scorn into kindly confidence; to draw forth his true nature once more; to compensate his pain with calm content.

It was different with Miles. Though he would have disdained the self-suspicion, he was half afraid of any reconciliation because of what that reconciliation now could never be. He was loyal to his first love in what he thought his hate. But hate is never dead indifference. It is the other side of love, and love is life.

So far he had kept successfully from Marion's path. He had not even passed her so nearly on the street as to have met her glance. He would by no means have held out his hand to her; he thought his contempt would have hindered him.

One evening Sam took Mrs. Fletcher—perhaps himself—by surprise.

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She had walked with him down the winding path, narrowed and dark with shrubbery, to the gate in her white front fence.

He took her hand to say good-night; suddenly he could not let it go.

"I must say it!" he broke forth. "You know already don't you?"

Yet as if she did not know, he told her; the old story, with the old demand, that mothers have to listen to and answer with struggle of love and joy and pain, or other passions, according to their differing natures. Her Rose was the rose of the world to him; might he tell her so?

Dismay was Marion's first feeling. She drew back her hand. It had come too soon. "Oh wait!" she entreated. "There hasn't been time!"

"My dear Mrs. Fletcher, for what? Does time count? All there ever was, or will be is present tense. The thing is——"

"Oh, I know. That is the trouble. With everything else time doesn't count. It will count with your uncle. It isn't present tense with him."

"No. He has to be persuaded down from his past," said Sam, not guessing how truly he spoke. "But if you and Rose——"

"Not yet," she interrupted. "There ought to be some opportunity for him to know Rose—to understand me—a little—better. If he would only come here, as you have come—a neighbour—and see for himself and believe! Mr. Otway," she went on after a pause, "I used to know him long ago, but I do not know him now. He is, they say, a peculiar, prejudiced man. It will all be strange to him. He will not like it. He will think, perhaps, that I have—managed."

Sam hardly understood her anxious incoherency. "My uncle does not visit," he said. "The only way is to tell him what has happened—if it may happen. He is peculiar, but he is a just man. I must be fair with him."

Yet with the words his mind misgave him. What would his uncle say? Would he give himself a chance, or would he commit himself by instant, stern refusal?

"Promise me to wait a little while," said Mrs. Fletcher.

"I will not press nor hurry you," the young man said, his tone unconsciously a shade uneasy. "But do not let it be too long. I do not like to keep things back. I would rather be quite open with my uncle from the beginning. Indeed, it is the wiser way."

Marion held out her hand again to say good-night, Sam pressed it warmly.

"I owe it to my Uncle Miles, you see," he said with gentle apology. "Yet, all the same, my own mind is made up, as a man's should be." With that he left her.

In her room afterward Mrs. Fletcher said to herself:

"I will see Miles Otway. I will make friends with him. Or else—for Rose's sake—I will leave it all to Sam. He is right. A man's mind should be made up."

A pleasant lane, with small houses on each side, ran up at the back of the high street from the village square, where were the shops and post-office. Miles often took this quiet, roundabout way in going home.

One morning he walked along it leisurely, pausing presently before a cottage. Two women lived there, mother and daughter, seamstresses. They sometimes did work for Mr. Otway. He now and then sent them fruits, vegetables, and flowers, from his own garden. He stood there, his cane tucked under one arm, while he cut some bits of the young-leaved, thorny twigs of the sweet brier.

The door opened; a lady came out. She wore a simple black dress, a bonnet of folded black silk, within whose edge a single, soft white line defined a fair, sweet face. No cataract of crèpe; no evasive ornament. A quiet acceptance of a fixed estate. Miles did not look up. He was busy with his cuttings. He stepped aside that she might pass, but she did not.

"Mr. Otway." The voice was calmly gentle.

Then he had to make some sign, for he was a gentleman. The hand that still held the knife went up to his hat and raised it slightly. If he ha known which way she meant to go he would have gone the other; but she did not move, and he stood still, trimming his sprigs.

"Why cannot we be friends?" the sweet voice said.

She half held out her hand, but he was busy, and he would not see.

"We are growing old, Miles."

"I am old. I do not make new friends."

"Nor forgive old ones?"

Miles looked straight at her then, as cold as stone.

"I don't know whether outgrowing is forgiving. I've outgrown a good deal in my life," he said.

Even yet she would not be repulsed; there was nothing in her meaning that could be ashamed.

"We are neighbours now," she said with kindly dignity. "I should like it to be in neighbourly content."

He had finished his work deliberately, and put his knife in his pocket. He took his stick from under his arm.

"I am content. But I don't make neighbours, either. It's too late for beginnings. I've lived my life."

He stepped off the path and lifted his hand to his hat.

"Not all of it," answered Marion, as she moved to go. "There is the Land of the Leal."

The Leal! Miles' lips flashed into a bitter curve.

"An uncertain place and population," he remarked frigidly. "I don't see how it can be largely re-enforced from this planet."

The man had the last word. Men occasionally do. He finished his intended salutation with a remote, stately courtesy, and passed on.

Mrs. Fletcher raised her interdict. Nothing else remained for her to do. Sam thereupon joined his uncle in the garden path one evening and made avowal.

"Uncle Miles," he said briefly, "I have found my girl of the period. Your exception, too, I think. The period has neither made nor spoilt her. She would have been the same at any period."

"You put a good many periods in your remarks without coming to the point. Please state your fact."

"I thought I was stating it. Not much remains. The girl I mean—the girl I hope to marry—is Rose Fletcher."

"That woman's daughter. That accounts."

"Her mother's daughter; yes, it does account," said Sam quickly, perceiving and resenting a prejudice, without at all comprehending it.

"For every perfection? Very likely you think so. I'm not surprised. She's that sort of woman. One way or another she'll flirt and cajole till she dies. She would

make eyes—for an object—at an organ-grinder's monkey."

He said it, calmly scornful, between slow whiffs of his pipe. The cumulative bitterness of his words drew itself from a new, severe wound—the sudden suspicious understanding of her beautiful overture of peace.

The absurdity was beyond resenting; Sam nearly laughed. But he answered curtly, "She would be sweet to anybody or anything, if that's what you mean."

"Yes, that's what I mean. And she would mean nothing but her own ends."

"Uncle, you are unjust; unworthy of yourself. You do not know Mrs. Fletcher."

"I knew her before you were born."

A faint apprehension flashed through Sam's mind.

"I cannot help it. You may have been mistaken then; you certainly are mistaken now. I hope you will think better of it," he was adding with entreaty, "for——"

"I don't think of it at all," interrupted the old man.

"But I ask you to think of it! Don't be hard, Uncle; this means everything in my life. There is absolutely no other way for me."

"Then our ways separate. I cannot help it either."

The two walked on without words. It was hard to break from each other so, hard to separate their ways.

"Understand," said Miles Otway, stopping when they reached the house again, and shaking the dead ashes from his pipe, "I have no spite in this matter. It will make no difference in what I shall ultimately do for you, though it may in a way of my doing it. Family property is a trust. You're safe in that respect. I've no threats to make. You can go your own way. But you cannot bring that young woman here; and"—slowly—"I will never enter your door. We will not speak of it any further."

It was the cruelest dismissal that could have been given. It was a torture that only one generous spirit, under warp and wound, could inflict upon another.

The marriage took place in February. On the night before his wedding the young man found upon his dressing-table an envelope; it held a cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds. In the morning he met his uncle as he came downstairs. Before the old man knew, Sam had his hand; the grasp was strong. "I know you don't want words," he said. "But I feel as you would in my place." Then they went in to breakfast together.

Sam bought "The Hollyhocks," an old house and small, long ago a beautiful mansion, but vandalised, in vulgar hands, by the improvements of forty years before, and now neither ancient nor modern. But there he and his wife were very happy.

* * * * *

When February came round again a beautiful happening at "The Hollyhocks" made the home complete. Miles Otway found a note on his breakfast-table.

"I have a little son," it said. "I shall give him the old family name. I hope you won't take it amiss."

The old man was crotchety that day. The new pull chafed hard the soreness of his harsh resolve.

The time went by. These last months had been the bitterest of all to Miles since the "separate ways" began. There was something in the world he had a right to, but that by his own action he could not take. Against this condition of things he rebelled. It was not comfortable.

One day he got a bit the best of it for the time being. "I owe the youngster that much anyhow," he said. Being a just man he went upstairs, took something out of an old chest and sent it to London. It came back in a neat silversmith's box. It lay a week in his drawer. He could not quite decide how to act.

Sam came in several times. He had never stayed away. It would have been easy enough to hand the parcel to him, but Uncle Miles said to himself with a vague obstinacy, "No hurry, I'll do it as I please."

Easter Monday arrived, and he had not found out what he pleased. Early after tea he took his stick, and walked over the hill. There was a bright young moon. The weather was clear and still.

Miles purpose was not even yet defined when he was in sight of the house. He might ring, do his errand, and go as he had come. Suppose Sam should open the door? What matter? He need not cross the threshold. He need not break that—confounded—word of his. Secretly, the wish was in him that something might happen to give a turn to things.

The door was open. Half unconsciously he stepped into the hall.

The handle of a door into an adjoining room turned softly. A small figure came out and stopped; a child's face stared up at him. Two little hands put themselves sturdily behind the back, however, and the look did not flinch.

"Does you want my mamma?" the boy asked.

For a moment the man was as much surprised as his small detective. Then it came to him.

"Oh, you're the other one," he said.

"No, I ain't ze uzzer one. Ze uzzer one's upstairs in a basket. He's ze new boy. I's ze one zat always was. He can't sit up to dinner. I's four years old."

"Oh!"

"Oo is you?"

"*Miles Otway*," was the grim, grave answer.

"Well," said the boy, "I ain't af'aid. An' I sink I's better go and tell ze ozzers."

"Show me the way. I'll go, too."

The boy turned, opened the door behind him and ran on shouting:

"I's got him! Here's sombody! I's caught him, my ownself!"

Miles Otway followed, composed and dignified.

* * * * *

Half an hour later dinner was served, Miles was at Rose's right hand, between her and Sam. Opposite were Marion and the boy.

Everybody had taken everything as of natural course. There had been no question or explanation. Uncle Miles had effected the grand gainsaying, he had contradicted himself.

In the middle of the table, close under the épergne of ferns, stood a beautiful old-fashioned cup. On it were three inscriptions:

Miles Otway, Jan. 4, 1798.
Miles Otway, Aug. 6, 1830.
Miles Otway, Feb. 2, 1892.

This last little Miles was brought down at dessert to be shown his inheritance.

Before little Gay was taken to bed he came and climbed upon the rung of Uncle Miles' chair.

"I know which you is now," he whispered in his ear, "You's the fairy godmovver!"

William Grace.

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AN UNWILLING PASSENGER.

A COLD east wind was sweeping over the unsheltered country where lay the little station of Lidby Junction—so cold that no one who could stay at home would have chosen to face it. Nevertheless three or four passengers had just alighted from the local train and were preparing to wait till the next "up" train was due. Whether they were willing travellers that bleak night may be left to conjecture.

All but one immediately sought the shelter and warmth of the waiting-room. The one—a gentleman—remained on the platform.

"How long to wait, porter?" he asked.

"Forty-five minutes, sir," was the answer.

The passenger pulled up the collar of his fur coat and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Not there!" he called out, as the porter, carrying his valise, made for the waiting-room. "Three women and a man there already and no chance of seeing the fire."

"You can't wait out here, sir," said the man, surprised.

"Don't intend to. I'll go and have a smoke at your fire, and you can help me to pass away the time. What's a porter for if not to make passengers comfortable? Now don't keep us standing here!"

The porter led the way without another word to the little den at the end of the platform of which he appeared to have the sole monopoly. It was neither clean nor inviting, but the fur-coated passenger pulled a chair up to the hearth, gave the fire a poke and quietly produced a silver cigarette case.

"Sit down," said he to the porter. "It's not your fault that there's no system in the working of country railways, and that passengers are shot out like bales of goods to wait for the next conveyance. If it was I should have enough to say to you for the next three-quarters of an hour. But it will be your fault if you don't fill your pipe out of that pouch."

"Thank 'e, sir," said the porter. "I'll not be in fault this time."

"I can't ask you to have a drink," said the other, as he applied the match to the end of his cigarette, "or I would. I want some one to pitch into about that too. But there are too many grievances to get over without plenty of time. The only solution I can see is not to travel at all. I daresay now, you've never been a twenty mile journey in your life?"

The porter was pressing the tobacco into the bowl of his pipe with a satisfied expression, and at the same time wondering what sort of a gent this was who carried things with so high a hand.

"Well, sir," he answered, "I can't exactly say that, for it's a deal more than twenty miles to the place where I was porter first. That was on the South-Western line. It was only last year I got sent on here."

"And how did you come to be carted off to this dead-alive hole?"

"I was laid up in hospital down at Exeter for six weeks, and my place was filled up. And talking of journeys, sir, it was all along of a journey that *that* happened."

"Yes?"

"Yes, sir, that it was. And it was the rummiest journey that as ever a man took."

The traveller glanced at the burly young man. "Well, how was that?" he asked.

"Well, sir," said the porter, not at all unwilling to tell his story, "it is just a year since then—much the same sort of a night as this, with not a star showin'. It was a little station like this, not many passengers as a rule, but a good many trains passin' through in the day. The lamps were all alight and the line signalled clear for the 'up' train. It was bitter cold, and I says to my mate, 'Not many for Exeter to-night,' for there were but two or three when the train came in. It stopped only a minute or two. Just as I was shutting the last door, I sees a man make a rush for it. He seemed to come out of the dark and not through the station door at all. He made for the carriage and got in, and before I knew any more I was gripped under the arms, pulled in too, and thrown down on the floor. The surprise sort o' stunned me for a minute, but when I looked up the train was moving and a tall man in grey was standing over me.

"'What's up?' says I, not knowing.

"He put his great foot on my chest. My eye! he *was* a big man—with eyes that seemed to screw you up like a gimlet.

"'Now look here,' says he, speaking quiet. 'If you do what I tell you no harm shall happen to you. If not, by——I'll kill you!' And I knew he meant it. 'I could choke you now,' says he; 'but if you will get up and change clothes with me you shall go scot free.'

"'Mad,' thinks I, 'no good refusing.' So I says 'yes,' and he lets me get up. I did it quick for I won't say as I wasn't in a bit of a fright. But you might have knocked me down with a feather, sir, when I saw his clothes—for they were a *convict's*, light drab colour with the broad arrow marked clear. No help for it. He got mine and had them on as quick as lightning.

"'Now,' says he, 'no noise,' and he gave me a blow that took the wind out of me and gagged me with my own pocket-handkerchief.

"Before I had got the better of that knock he had tied my hands together with the strap he wrenched off the window and I lay helpless. I was no match for such mighty strength.

"'Now,' says he, 'so long as you lie quiet under the seat you are safe,' and with that he gave me a push, and then I lay like a log.

"The train stopped just after that. I couldn't move, and no one came in, and the convict's great boots were so close to my head that I didn't like the idea of a knock with them. So I lay quiet. Then we stopped at Okehampton. Someone got in. I couldn't see, but I knew presently it was a woman. She sat on the seat I was lying under. 'A cold night ma'am,' says the convict, but his voice was so altered that I shouldn't have known it.

"'Yes it is cold,' says the other, and I knew she was a

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lady. Then he began to talk for all the world just as though he was really a porter. Very soon he had made her believe that he belonged to Exeter station and promised to find her a cab when the train arrived there. I lay wonder ng how all this was going to end. At Crediton the carriage door opened again, and this time a man came in. My heart began to beat at the thought of help. If only I could get my hands undone I thought I could finish this little play. But I was tied fast—with the convict's boots close to my head, and I began to think of the figure I'd cut in that convict rig-out even if I did appear.

"Presently the villain began to talk to the man who had just come in. He was a farmer—a slow-speaking chap—elderly, I soon found out, and a bit asthmatical.

"'Bad weather for you,' says the convict.

"'Middlin' bad,' answers the other.

"'Got far to go, sir?' asks my man.

"'Exeter,' answers the farmer. 'My son there's took mortal bad.' And then he began wheezing and coughing, and I saw I shouldn't get much help from him.

"There was no more talking for some time, and I kept turning over in my mind what would happen when we got to Exeter. That would be my chance, I thought, and no good moving before and running the chance of being kicked to death. I tell you, sir, I never went through such a time as that—never in all my life.

"At last we got near Exeter.

"'Tickets please,' was the next thing. My man was as cool as a cucumber.

"'Haven't got my pass,' says he.

"He knew his porter's dress 'et him travel free.

"'Got to see the station master at Exeter.'

"'Where from?' asks the ticket collector.

"'Lydford; name—Joe Snell; all right. Goin' back to-night.'

"The door was shut. He had got my name too, as pat as if he'd had it at baptism. I remembered a letter there was in the pocket of my coat from my girl, and I felt like shaking the breath out of him.

"Just as we were slowing into Exeter, says he to the young lady:

"'Now miss, let me take your bags and rugs and follow me. I'll see you all right.'

"'Now I'll be rid of you,' thinks I, 'and if I'm half a man you'll not get off!'

"But just as I was thinking that, he leaned over and whispered something to the farmer. I couldn't hear the words nor see their faces but the farmer made a sound as if he was startled

"'Good Lord!' cries he, and there was another whisper. Just then the train stopped. Quick as thought out jumps the convict and helps the lady. The farmer follows as if he couldn't get out quick enough, and the door was shut and in another moment *locked*, as I could hear by the click of the key.

"What was this for? I tr ed to wriggle out from under the seat, though I could not get my hands free or stand up, for that wretch had bound me so fast. Then I heard voices outside the door, and the farmer's wheeze as he told his tale. Five minutes passed, perhaps. I could see faces watching me through the window, but when I tried to lift up my head it was all swimming and confused like. The next thing I knew was that I was being dragged out and carried along the platform by two strong men. They took me inside the station-master's office and made me sit down. Then they took the handkerchief from my mouth. I was half choked and kept gasping before I could speak.

"Then I begged to have my hands undone, for the strap was cutting my flesh.

"'All right, my man,' said one, and I saw that he was a policeman. 'You won't do much mischief now.'

"'It was a good piece of work to nobble *you*,' says another. 'Where's the porter—what's his name?'

"'Joe Snell,' answers the wheezy farmer. 'He's gone with a lady, and he'll be back in a minute. He asked me to keep guard.'

"'I'm Joe Snell!' cried I. 'He is the convict who went with the lady. He's the rascal!' There was a laugh.

"'Yes, we know all about it,' said the sergeant.

"'Of course *you're* not an escaped convict from Dartmoor—Oh no!'

"Then I got desperate. My head got queer again and I didn't know what happened.

"But when I came to I was lying on the floor with something under my head. The farmer was talking.

"'That's exactly how it all happened,' he was saying, 'and a pretty sort of game to be travelling with a mad convict. But you've got 'im, and now you've got to keep 'im, and I must go.'

"So I was left with the policeman and station-master and some others.

"'Well, where's that there porter?' said one.

"'Takin' his time with the lady, considerin' the company as is waitin',' said another.

"'Look here,' says I, feelin' a bit better, 'I ain't no convict. Look at my hair—is it close-cropped? Look at my clothes under this darned fit-out and see if they don't belong to Joe Snell.'

"Then says one to the other, 'Never thought of his hair—but it's got no prison cut.' Then they fell to examining my clothes, and they soon saw that what I said was true. Then there was a bit of a shine, I promise you, sir, for all this time—and it wasn't far short of twenty minutes—the sham porter had been making off with the young lady's bag, and no doubt money in it, and my clothes to keep him from being found out.

"They telegraphed to Lydford and the station-master came on by the next train and identified me. By ten o'clock that night I was in bed comfortable at the station-master's house at Exeter, with them convict clothes taken away by the police.

"I was taken to hospital next day, for that bangin' about of my head had made me bad, and they said I was ravin' about the convict for days and nights. And that's how it was I never went back to Lydford."

"And, the convict?" inquired the passenger, looking at his watch, and pulling up his fur collar.

"Never heard of again so far as I know," said the porter. "He managed well and no mistake. It was a dark night and he got off with the lady's bag and rugs. And, whatever he did with himself, *my* clothes was seen no more. Here's your train, sir."

"Clever fellow that," said the passenger, as he walked across the platform to his carriage. "I should like to know what became of him."

Something in his voice made the porter look up quickly as he held out his hand for what the passenger offered him. The next moment the train had moved away and the sneering face was lost to view.

"Could it have been his brother?" the startled porter was asking himself, "or——?" But there was no answer to his question.

E. Dawson.

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My Sleeve-Link.

I HAD strolled into the park to pass the time that hung heavy on my hands. On the morrow I was to take part in what was, at least to me and one other, an important affair; and nothing is more trying than waiting for a crisis.

On a grass plot not far from where I lounged, a couple of French *bonnes* were gossiping, while the children they watched chased each other over the green sward. I could occasionally catch words as the little ones shouted to each other, and I knew they were English—at least they spoke the English tongue. One of them, a little girl of perhaps six or seven years, had dashed by me several times, with flying ringlets. In her sash was that which plainly showed she had disregarded the instructions posted everywhere in this German park: "*Es ist nicht erlaubt Blumen abzupflücken.*" "It is not permitted to pluck the flowers." In one of her flights I stopped her.

"Don't you see," I said, pointing with my stick to one of these notices, "they won't let anyone pick the flowers?"

She looked from me to the notice, then at her flowers; then fixed her eyes straight on mine. But her mind was not easily made up to such an informal introduction, and she soon dropped her eyes again to the flowers.

"Suppose a policeman should come along," I went on, "and find these flowers in your sash?"

Her brow knit in a frown, but still she did not deign to answer.

"Never mind; I'll try to get him to let you off, if he comes."

"But if you can't?" said a little voice. It was so little and so timid that I scarcely heard it.

"I can try. Won't you give me one of the flowers?"

In a twinkling she forgot her fears. A new question came up to drive the first right out of her little brain. She began to pick over the flowers, hunting for one worthy of a gift.

On the road at the foot of the slope one of the guardians of the park was loitering in the sun, his hands clasped behind him, his sabre swinging like the pendulum of a clock as he walked with his head thrown back, that he might see from under his helmet. Presently, instead of stopping when he came to the end of his beat, he kept on, round a curve in the road, disappearing for a few moments behind a clump of trees.

"The policeman!" I exclaimed to the child. "He's coming."

"Where?"

Her cheek whitened.

"Down there, behind the trees."

She looked anxiously in the direction I pointed.

"Give me the flowers," I said. "He'll think I took them."

"No."

"Yes, quick."

"No, no," she cried, impatiently stamping her diminutive foot.

"Why not?"

"You didn't take them."

"Well, come and sit by me, I won't let him hurt you."

She came and climbed upon the seat beside me. The policeman came on, professedly looking at the flowerbeds or the trees, or up at the sky, but really at the maids. As he came near where we were sitting, I could hear my *protégée's* little heart beating like a toy-drumstick. When he came opposite us, what was my astonishment to see her take the flowers from her girdle and hold them toward him, and call out:

"I took your flowers, Mr. P'liceman. Are you going to take me to prison?"

Fortunately she spoke in English, and not till a moment after he had passed. He kept on without noticing us, round the road which bent in an ellipse about the sward.

Then my little girl buried her face against my shoulder and burst into tears.

"Never mind, little one; he shouldn't have troubled you; I'd have spitted him on his own steel first," I said comfortingly.

In another moment there was a transition. Undried tears stood on her cheek, but every other vestige of distress had disappeared. She stepped down off the seat.

"Are you going to leave me?" I asked.

"Yes."

"So soon?"

"I may come back again if—"

"If the policeman comes, you little coward—no, you little heroine. Won't you give me a kiss before you go?"

She looked down on the walk, neither assenting to nor dissenting from my proposition. I drew her towards me, and taking her head between my two hands, looked into her face.

I had quarrelled with my chum, an Englishman, like myself. The quarrel arose from nothing, but it led to an assignment for a duel, after the German fashion. I was enraged, yet I had an uncomfortable feeling that I was in fault.

Presently she asked; "Have you got a girl?"

"No, I haven't a girl,—or boy, or mother, or anyone?"

"I don't like that."

Her big blue eyes were full of sympathy.

"Deedie!" called one of the maids.

"I must go now. Emilie is calling me."

"Go and ask Emilie if you may come back and stay with me a little longer."

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"Will you wait here till I come?"

"Certainly."

I leaned back on the wooden seat and watched an animated conversation between the *bonne* and the child, speaking, from what I could hear, in French. Presently she came running back with the information that she might stay a little longer.

I sat for some time trying to keep her with me, for at the sight of a butterfly or a humming-bird she would be off like the wind. When she came back from one of these flights I drew her to me to caress her. I asked her about a bead necklace she wore, and who gave it to her; and took hold of it to examine it, that my hand might touch her warm neck. And all the time she prattled, and asked me questions, and told me about people whose identity she didn't trouble herself to explain, as though I had always known them.

I was forgetting everything in this innocence, this diminutive combination of strength and weakness. She insisted on decorating me wi h the flowers she had appropriated, and soon made me look like a figure in a flower-bed. Then she stood off and looked at me, and clapped her hands in great glee and laughed, and I laughed myself.

"Deedie!"

"Your nurse is calling you again; you must go."

"Are you coming here to-morrow?" she asked.

The question startled me. It brought me back to my quarrel. Where might I be to-morrow?

"Do you wish me to come?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Very much?"

"Ever so much."

An expression of pain must have passed over my face, for she asked:

"Why do you look sorry?"

"Go. But stay a moment. What can I give you for a keepsake?" I felt in my vest-pocket for some trinket, but could find nothing. "Here." I pulled a cameo sleeve-button from my cuff and handed it to her.

She drew back. "Mamma won't let me take things from people."

"Take it, and if your mamma won't let you keep it, you can bring it back to me another day."

"To-morrow?"

"Go! go! good-bye."

I wound my arms about her and kissed her. When I opened them it was like letting a bird out of a cage. She flew like a swallow near the ground across the grass, to rejoin the nurses and the other children. Then they all arose and walked away.

* * * * *

Four weeks elapsed before I went into the park again. Then my complexion was many shades whiter, and two stout canes lay beside me on the seat on which I sat, the same on which I rested when I made the acquaintance of Deedie. I was convalescent. I had taken part in what I feel that I speak assuredly when I say was my last *affaire d'honneur*. I had been severely wounded.

It was now midsummer, and I was glad to be protected from the sun by an elm which spread its branches near me. I had come to the park with a vain hope of meeting my friend—my little girl who had so charmed me by her innocent prattle and, more than all, by her childish exhibition of moral courage.

While I sat I meditated on my parting with her a month before—the disappointment she must have experienced when she came to the park the next day, and did not find me.

The next day! What had it brought for me?

Just before dawn of that eventful morning I lay dreaming—dreaming that I walked in the park with Deedie—yet not Deedie the child. She had grown to be a woman. The park, too, had changed. The trees had grown wonderfully; saplings which the day before had only reached to my head were now twice as high. And Deedie—she was not the little romp of yesterday, but wore a countenance of deep seriousness—she walked beside me calmly and with a certain awe-inspiring stateliness. Her features retained all the delicacy of a child, but added the sympathy of a woman. And she reproached, asking me if I would kill a man whom I had insulted.

Then I felt a vice-like grip on my arm, and found myself awakened. A strapping youngster about my own age, with a box under his arm, was visible in the glimmer of early dawn.

"Never mind the girl," he said; "get up."

"What girl?"

"The one you've been calling in your sleep."

The laugh that accompanied his words jarred upon me, scarcely awakened from my vivid dream.

"What is it?" I asked, bewildered.

"Here;" and he tapped with his finger on the box.

"Yes, yes, I see."

I threw off the covering and sprang up.

* * * * *

There is the policeman walking on the same beat, his sabre swinging, his head thrown back. But where is the child? I scan the different groups near me. No. She isn't here. I should know her among a thousand children.

But to return to that eventful morning. I was an excellent shot; he was a bungler. I had tried to make him a better, but he was too clumsy. He could handle neither a foil nor a pistol, and hadn't the delicacy of sight or touch to learn.

I cast a glance at my adversary's face. He was calm and resolute. I saw as plainly as words could have told me the condition of his mind. Besides, I knew him well. His nature was eminently practical. He was the most stolid, matter-of fact man I ever knew, yet honest and steadfast at heart. He had determined that he must kill me, or I would kill him; and he had decided to kill me if he could.

We were not on the field ten minutes. The distance was paced. I was handed my pistol and sent to my station. The word was given.

But other words sounded in my ears with the signal to fire—the words spoken to me by Deedie in my dream.

Both shots rang out as one, sharp and spiteful on the quiet morning air. I purposely fired aside from the living mark before me. My adversary stood unhurt; I had a bullet in my side.

I saw a figure striding towards me. It looked strange and tall and indistinct, but I knew it was my adversary.

"Are you satisfied?" I asked.

"Satisfied! Good heaven! are you badly hurt?"

"It was all my fault," I extended my hand. He attempted to take it, but the seconds interfered. "We haven't time for palaver; we must get away from here at once."

A carriage in which the medical student had come to the ground stood in the road near by. I was hurried

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into it, or rather carried, for I was fainting. The doctor and my second got in with me, and we drove to my rooms. The others hurried off in a different direction.

All that morning I lay on my bed, experiencing a mental, if not a physical, convalescence. I had been badly wounded, but this was nothing. My hot head had been turned into gentler veins of thought. I had been saved from a bitter memory, a fiend that would have pursued me through life. I was in an ecstacy when I realized that I had not killed my friend—that my hands were bloodless. I was thinking of the diminutive shield which had been thrust between me and crime—the little maid I had met in the park.

She is perhaps seven, I mused; I am twenty. Seven from twenty leaves thirteen. When she is twenty I shall be thirty-three. That's not a great difference. Then I made a vow—a reckless, absurd boyish vow. Ah! the hot impulse of youth; into what follies does it lead us!

One of my first acts on getting out was to take my remaining sleeve-button to a jeweller and have a pin attached, that I might wear it in my scarf. Perhaps she will do the same, I argued; and I have an abiding faith that by this means we shall one day recognise each other. There was another link by which I might know her: Deedie, I learned, was the diminutive for Delia; so Delia must be her Christian name.

I sat in the park till sunset. I saw again in fancy the group of a month before walking away, and Deedie dancing backward and holding up her token and throwing me kisses. Then the figure melted from my fancy as it had faded from my eyes before. I arose and walked away. For the first time in my life I experienced a sensation of loneliness.

After that, on bright days I often visited the park, but not to find my little love. Doubtless she had returned to England. At last I completed my studies and left the university.

* * * * *

Twelve years passed, during which, if my child friend did not pass entirely out of my mind, she at least became a very indistinct image on my memory. I had become a quiet, matter of fact man, with no fancy whatever for the sight of blood, and without the slightest predilection for making vows. The one I had made so long before I was not disposed to regard as strictly binding; and should any reason occur for breaking it, I did not look upon it as a serious obstacle.

I was sitting one summer afternoon on the porch of a hotel facing the beach, chatting with a friend—a lady. It was the hour when the young lady sojourners, dressed in tasteful costumes, promenaded to and fro; quite enough of them, I thought, to form a battalion of beauty.

Suddenly in one of the groups that went by, appeared one who, as she passed, nodded pleasantly to the lady with whom I was sitting. The salutation was unstudied, yet not familiar—a happy combination of cordiality and dignity. The smile that accompanied it sent a thrill through me in a twinkling.

"Who is that?" I inquired, quickly.

"Miss Ward."

"Her Christian name?"

"Edith."

"No, no, her other name?"

"She has no other."

"Isn't it Delia?"

"Simply Edith. Would you like to know her?"

I rested back in the chair from which I had started.

"Thank you; I'll not trouble you. I shall not be here long."

The next afternoon I was standing at the door with my friend, taking my leave. A bevy of young girls approached, and one of them, wishing to speak with my friend, stopped for the purpose. In a moment I was introduced to the whole party. One of the young ladies was Miss Ward.

There was about this girl a certain high-born reserve which alternated with an engaging frankness and sprightliness. There were two sides to her disposition, the one merry, the other serious. A low melodious laugh expressed keen enjoyment to perfection; but if anything occurred to divert her from merriment to seriousness, there came without warning that which inspired me with a kind of awe.

Instead of departing at once, as I intended, I did not leave the hotel for four weeks. I prolonged my stay, notwithstanding a number of resolutions to the contrary, until I began to censure myself for being weak. At last, perceiving that my stay was noticed by my friends, I resolved to leave immediately.

On the evening on which I made this new—and I determined it should prove an irrevocable—resolution, I chanced to be sitting with—Miss Ward. The moon was at the full. It seems singular to me now that I should have presumed to speak so confidingly to one I had known so short a time. Besides, my companion had not encouraged any special confidence on my part. Indeed, I regretted that she had ceased to treat me with the unconventionality of the others, and seemed at times a trifle constrained.

What it was that led me to confide in her on the evening mentioned I can scarcely conceive, unless it was that exquisite hour—the most delightful to me of all hours of the day—when the newly-risen full moon stands on the horizon as if pausing to survey the landscape, and then begins to rise, a great illuminated ball, in the heavens.

Whatever was the cause, I touched upon several episodes in my life, among them the story of my meeting little Delia in the park in Germany, twelve years before. I gave a minute account of what occurred. "Here," I said, putting my finger on my scarf-pin, "is the mate to a keepsake I gave her."

"What a beautiful cameo!" she looked at it closely. "I think I have noticed it in your scarf before."

I took it from its place and handed it to her. She bent over it to examine the carving in the mingling twilight and moonlight.

"You haven't told me," she said, without looking up, "what it was that engaged your attention on the day after you parted with the little girl."

I hesitated.

"That would scarcely interest a woman."

"But I wish to know."

I told her of my quarrel with my friend; my dream before going out to the field; my firing aside, and receiving my adversary's bullet. As I gave the short story she bent closer to the object she was examining, until her face was entirely hidden from me. When I had finished we sat some time in silence.

"This pin," she remarked at last, "must have been cut at Rome."

"It was."

"And the child—" she went on, "she really prevented your becoming—murderer?"

"Would you have so regarded me?" I looked at her anxiously.

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"Yes, and more"; she raised her eyes and fixed them full upon mine; "a coward."

Great heavens! how like the look of the face of Delia, in my dream of years before!

"And you have given up all expectation of ever seeing the child again?" she asked, turning her eyes from me to the cameo.

"I scarcely know if I should wish to meet her."

"Why?"

"Under an impulse of gratitude for the unknowing part she had taken in preventing my being a—murderer ——"

"And a coward," she interrupted.

"And a coward," I admitted, "I made a silly, sentimental vow."

"What vow?" she frowned.

"That no other person should be my wife; that I would seek her, and when found, if ever, I would win her——"

"Supposing that she would be willing," she added, not giving me time to finish.

It was plain that I had antagonised her.

"Of course."

"Well?"

"Since then"—I looked out at the peaceful moon, at the deepening shadows, "since then I have met one who has driven the child-image from my mind—I fear from my heart."

We sat without speaking, each waiting for the other to break the silence.

"You have spoiled a pretty story," she said, somewhat sadly. "You should have been true to the little girl. How do you know but what she is treasuring the mate to your pin?"

"She was too young."

"How old did you say?"

"Seven, perhaps."

"Seven! That's not too young. I was impressed myself at that age."

"May I ask, are you true to that impression?"

She hesitated.

"I have treasured an ideal. But I must go in," she added, in another moment; and rising, she moved towards a window opening on the balcony.

"Good-night."

She stepped in at the window. As she crossed the sill and entered the room she turned. A smile, a frank, happy smile broke over her face. It bespoke the merry side of her disposition. In another moment she was gone.

That night I dreamed. I was again in the park in Germany. It was night. The image of a former dream walked beside me. The features of that image had long ago faded from my memory. Now they were the features of Miss Ward.

"Would you kill him because you insulted him? because you struck him?" The words came strangely, as out of a dead past.

"No, no; I will kill no one. I am no longer a boy. I thank Heaven I escaped this dreadful result of that boyish folly. It was you who taught me what is true courage; teach me now what is love?"

The next evening I met Miss Ward again. I expected it would be my last evening at the sea-side that summer. We sat in the nook where we had sat together so often before. Whether it was the prospect of my departure, or a suddenly imparted knowledge of the condition of my feelings, I do not know to this day, but the spell that had been gathering about me for weeks appeared suddenly intensified. Led on, it seemed, by a sort of fatality, I suddenly burst into a torrent of words which I had never dreamt of speaking when I joined her. I poured out my feelings in a number of short, glowing sentences.

I well remember her first words after I had ceased to speak. They conveyed to me the first knowledge of how deeply I was stung.

"But your vow?" she said. Startled, I had forgotten it. "Do you think it would be right for you to break it?"

I was silent.

"You must keep it."

Something told me that, however I might regard its keeping or its breaking, there was no compromise to be hoped for from the only woman who would be a temptation for me to break it.

She had been toying with my cameo, which she had desired to examine again. As she spoke the last words she arose and handed it back to me. I interpreted the act to mean a parting.

"I cannot. I will not," I cried, passionately.

"You can and you will," she replied. There was a sparkle in her eye. The other features of her face only indicated sympathy, kindliness.

"Good-bye," I faltered.

"Rather say adieu," she said, softly. She took my hand and pressed it kindly. "I shall have a word to say to you before you go," she added. "May I see you here to-morrow evening, when the moon rises?"

"Better go at once," I replied, bitterly.

"Shall I see you?" she repeated.

I bowed a silent assent.

The interval between this parting and the next evening seemed interminable. I believed her decision to be irrevocable; but what lover will not hope so long as there is a desire? Still, I wished it all over.

She came. She was clad in the light drapery of midsummer. The moonlight fell on her figure, softening the gauzy folds of her dress and blending them with the environing shadow. She was to me a human apparition; substantial yet unsubstantial, spiritual loveliness in human beauty. Why was she not less beautiful or less conscientious?

As she approached, my eye was caught by a flash of something, evidently metallic, where a lace handkerchief crossed her bosom. I was led by some unaccountable attraction to fasten my gaze on this object, which I knew I had not seen before, and which, as she drew nearer, shaped itself more distinctly. In another moment it flashed upon me what it was.

And what was it? To this day the answer brings a thrill of pleasure. It was the mate to my cameo.

I sprang across the short distance that separated us.

"And you are Delia?"

"No, Edith."

"How did you come by that cameo?"

"You gave it to me."

"And the name Delia?—explain."

"That was my father's doing. It was first Edie. Papa corrupted it to Deedie."

A single letter had misled me for twelve years

"And you have kept my souvenir?"

"I was forbidden to do so. I went to the park the day after I met you to return it. You were not there."

"No, I was not there. And you remember me?"

"I have not entirely forgotten," she said, dropping her eyes, "though I was rather young to——"

She did not finish.

"Love?" I asked, trembling.

Anthony Wilde.

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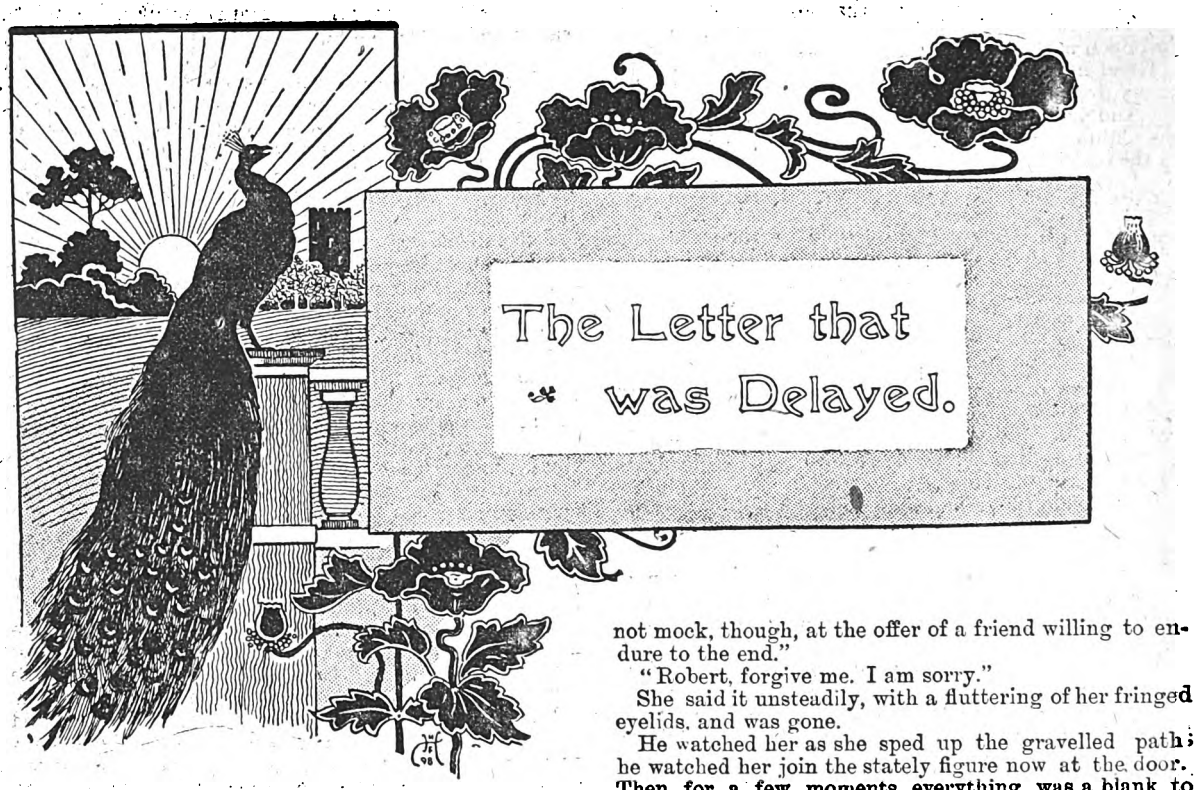

THEY stood at the little gate together for the last time.

"Impossible!" she had said, in her disdainful way, with a flash of those wonderful eyes, whose false glamour Robert Strong had come to love only too well.

"Impossible?" He repeated it over and over, hardly knowing what he said. He took the pretty fair face in his two hands, and held it tightly.

"Nelly, come out of the damp," called a thin, affected voice.

Robert only bent closer to the face beneath him.

"She will have more to answer for than you," he said, thickly, "and I am glad of that; it softens the bitterness. Yet, even now, when I am feeling so keenly how cruelly you have lured me on, I cannot hate you, Nelly."

She shivered and made a motion to free herself.

"Stand still," he said, almost roughly, and then he loosed her at once, and moved back.

And the thin voice came to them again, this time a little sharper still.

As the girl turned, her eyes swept into Robert's a swift, sudden appeal.

It was strange how the moonlight brought out in that one fleeting look a weird, indefinable foreshadowing of future suffering.

"Heaven be praised," cried Robert, catching at her dress, "that I love you still, for by the strength of that love I will yet save you. Will you let me? Will you send for me?"

"Mr. Strong, you are sentimental. My aunt is waiting for me. Good-night." She spoke coldly and proudly.

"Oh, Nelly!" he cried in pain, "you believe that sorrow can never touch you. I hope it never may! Do not mock, though, at the offer of a friend willing to endure to the end."

"Robert, forgive me. I am sorry."

She said it unsteadily, with a fluttering of her fringed eyelids, and was gone.

He watched her as she sped up the gravelled path; he watched her join the stately figure now at the door. Then for a few moments everything was a blank to him. He realised at last how his life's love had been thrown away.

Robert Strong buried himself deeper than ever among his models and machinery after the de arture of Nelly and her aunt, and strove to forget the wild dream of his love.

With the strength of a giant he rode over his broad acres, directing, over-looking. With a surplus of zeal he carried on his work till his new-fangled notions and machines made the worthy country people wonder if he had gone mad, and clothed his name with fame and repute in the world outside.

"Yes, yes, yes," Robert's mother would say when the neighbours came in and talked over what a great man Robert was becoming, "my boy knows what he's about. I'm old-fashioned myself, and don't understand all his new-fangled names and ideas, but I've got faith in him, and I hope to live long enough to see the end."

But it was willed otherwise, and one morning the old lady was found dead in her bed, with a pleasant smile on her wrinkled face.

Desolate was the great house without the dear mother. Papers and models and dusty scientific books lost their relish, and, drive it away as he would, the image of Nelly rose before him.

In every leisure moment, at night, in his dreams, he saw her, and always with those last wavering words on her lips: "Robert, forgive me. I am sorry."

"She shall see how I can forgive her," said he. "She is in trouble. I will go to her at once."

And shrewd, clear-headed Robert Strong, who was so swiftly and surely making his name in the world by his deep insight into scientific and mathematical knowledge, packed his bag with all the nervous fidgetiness of a raw school boy, and hurried away haunted with a morbid

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dread lest the pretty, fair face that had played him false had come to sorrow.

But the pretty face, fairer than ever, beamed out on him from under a pink-lined parasol and a chip hat wreathed with the twining convolvulus.

Alas! for the wild chimeras that had taken possession of his brain! He drew back into the embrasure of the window, with his face clouding.

Another presence invaded Robert's lookout. A gentleman in appearance, as could be seen at a glance, evidently unaware that the window was already tenanted.

He seemed to be searching for some one in the crowd outside. At length his gaze fastened upon Nelly.

"Ah, there you are!" he hissed, with an evil look. "Coquette, is it? None knows that better than I! Ah, my beauty, smile on in your insolence while you may, for my evil wishes will follow you."

Robert Strong laid his hand heavily on the stranger's shoulder.

"I am that lady's friend," he said, with a motion towards her. "You are answerable to me for the language you have just used. Here is my card."

Robert towered up in his wrath grandly. Here was a champion not to be trifled with.

Let us give Henry Daland, for that was the stranger's name, credit as a rare tactician. In that one surprised moment he knew his man and took his cue.

"Robert Strong!" he read the name from the card. "Your name is familiar to me, and I would stand well with you. For the ungentlemanly words you so accidentally heard me utter, I indeed owe an apology, and to you as her friend I most humbly tender it. Perhaps if you knew the circumstances, you might pity as well as blame."

He threw an indescribable pathos and grace into his speech, and his voice trembled in irrepressible sadness at the end.

Robert thought of his own suffering, and held out his hand.

"Let us be friends," said he, "since we are brothers in affliction."

"It seems as though I should go mad," said Henry Daland. "I was so sure of winning her, and she encouraged me above all others till the peer came. That is he, riding in the carriage with her."

"Poor lad," said Robert, clasping him tighter.

In the evening the two stood arm in arm at the end of the long hall, and looked at Nelly standing in the centre.

There were other cheeks as fair, other faces as lovely, but by the supreme witchery of her power she was queen of them all.

Once she swept so close that her silken skirt brushed against them, and a rose fell from the dusky brown of her hair at their feet. Henry Daland was about to crush it with his foot, but Robert picked it up.

In the morning Robert started for home, leaving no word or sign for Nelly, and his new friend went with him.

The old farmhouse had a visitor for two or three weeks. A pleasant spoken, agreeable gentleman everybody agreed, and one whom Robert liked right heartily, and when at last he bid him good-bye, he did it with honest regret.

Sometimes those first words of Henry Daland's would come back to him strangely and unpleasantly, and then, ashamed of even one traitorous thought towards the one he called friend, he would take himself to task, saying:

"To think the poor fellow meant anything, when he was so cut up and dazed."

* * * * *

"Please, sir," said the postmaster's small boy, twisting his battered hat awkwardly in one hand, and holding a diminutive letter gingerly in the other, "father says as how this 'ere got lost somehow or nuther in atween the hind leg of the shelf and the iron safe, and he hopes as how it won't matter so much, seeing it's a small one."

Robert snatched the letter. He felt instinctively what was to come. It needed not the signature of "Nelly" to tell him whom it was from.

"Come, come," she said. "Oh, Robert, you are my only hope! Save me, or I am lost."

His shaggy eyebrows almost met as his eye caught the date. He groaned aloud when he thought of the months that her incoherent prayer had lain neglected amongst the dust and litter of the country post-office.

While his neighbours were wondering at his departure, Robert Strong, possessed with a fierce unrest, paced backwards and forwards on the deck of an ocean steamer, outward bound.

With tide, steam, and wind all in his favour, it seemed but a snail's pace he travelled at. He shuddered when he thought of Nelly's letter, and the time lost.

And when at last he reached Capetown, and found the house in ruins, and no trace of her, he was almost ready, in the first weakness of disappointment, to lie down and accept the fate that so persistently followed him.

But Robert Strong was not one to give up easily, and soon he set himself to work again with all his accustomed determination. Baffled and foiled, he woke to the knowledge that some secret enemy dogged his footsteps and turned back his sure success.

He sat one evening in a café, thinking this over, when a man at one of the tables behind him fell down in a fit.

Robert had no recognition of the features as they lay convulsed before him, but as they smoothed themselves out he saw Henry Daland, gentlemanly and aristocratic in appearance still, but fearfully haggard and emaciated.

Nobody knew him, and there was nothing about him to prove his identity. Insensible, he was conveyed to Robert Strong's rooms and left to his care.

And tenderly did Robert nurse him all through the terrible illness that the physicians declared must prove fatal.

"Nelly, Nelly!" the sick man would cry in his delirium, and then, defiantly, "I will see her! Stand back!" wrestling with his arms as if fighting a crowd; then, as if he had seen something frightful, he would cower and hide under the bed-clothes. "Is she alive? Did I murder her?" in a whisper, and with a loud laugh. "No, no; go away. That is not she. She is deceiving me again. Where is she?"

And it grew upon Robert slowly as he watched, that from Henry Daland's lips the mystery would stand revealed.

Anxiously did he wait the return of reason. After weeks of suspense it came.

Calming down from a furious paroxysm, he lay as if exhausted for several hours, and then opening his eyes fully upon Robert, he asked, rationally:

"How long have I been here?"

He was propped up with pillows, and motioned for Robert to come nearer.

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"If you do not already know," said he, "I have something to tell you."

"About Nelly?"

Henry Daland nodded.

"And you are the one who threw me off the track; you betrayed me; you brought peril to her."

Another gesture of assent.

"Traitor!" cried Robert.

"Stay! I have not long to live. Listen and I will tell you all. A year ago I made a friend of you for an object; otherwise you would have run me to the ground. In consequence of the honest faith you credited me with, I was enabled to follow her unmolested. I followed her to here, and saw a millionaire succeed the English lord."

Henry Daland's eyes grew brilliant with excitement; his hollow cheeks flushed."

"I kept a magnificent house. I spent my money like water. This gave me the *entrée* to the superb madam and her beautiful neice, Nelly Harland.

"Fate favoured me. By the overturning of a carriage Nelly's uncle was suddenly killed. His wife was brought home in hysterics, and died in a week. Nelly, herself, was prostrated by the blow, and her friends fell away like autumn leaves, for it was found that her uncle had died bankrupt.

"Here then was my time. I concocted a scheme, which I may truly say was fiendish."

The colour had faded by this time from the speaker's cheek, and he lay a moment gasping for breath.

Robert Strong forgot he was a dying man and leaned forward.

"Do not dare to fail me now," he said passionately, "or——"

"Hush!" said Henry Daland, with difficulty. "What are earthly threats to me! Have patience and you shall hear all. I hired the house; I bribed the servants; all this unknown to her. By and by she grew better; she came downstairs; she asked questions.

"At length she was told all by the housekeeper, and coming in upon her she fell in a dead faint at my feet. Sending the housekeeper away, I held her in my arms till she revived.

"In her first weakness she was obliged to submit, but soon she freed herself and stood indignant before me.

"'Do you not know that you are hateful to me?' she said. 'Do you think I could ever consent to marry you?'

"'I am no more particular about that than you,' said I, twiddling my watch-chain.

"'How dare you stay in my house?'

"'Softly,' I lisped, 'it's my house, and you know it, and I don't risk as much as you.'

"Her eyes blazed.

"'I will leave.'

"I mocked her with a reverence.

"'Simply impossible, for I am your gaoler.'

"For a month she made every effort to escape, but I thwarted her at every turn. At last she got desperate."

"It was then she wrote to me," groaned Robert, with the big veins bulging out in his forehead. He shook the dying man, who was fast growing unconscious.

"Tell me what happened," he said.

"She jumped from her window in the third storey."

"On the pavement?" cried Robert, in horror.

Henry Daland took no notice of the question; his eyes were glazing.

"By all your hopes of eternal forgiveness," said Robert in agony, "say if she lives."

With a desperate effort the stiff lips articulated something, then the jaw fell—he was gone.

Down the street, with quick, unconscious tread strode Robert Strong.

He at once made his way to the nearest hospital. The grey-haired porter stood at the open gate, and he passed in without seeing him.

He walked through the sunshiny court-yard and through the cool corridors. They were all untenanted; he wished to meet someone now of whom he could make enquiries.

There was a rumbling down one of the long passages, and just as Robert turned the corner, a little wicker carriage appeared in sight, propelled by the occupant, a woman.

It stood still as he advanced and asked—

"Where can I find Miss Harland?"

"Here," said the woman, meekly and gravely, her hands folded on her breast.

"Yes, I know she is here somewhere, but where can I see her?" said Robert, gently, wondering (strange he should have troubled himself then) if this woman's face (it was hidden by her bonnet) was as calm and dead as her voice.

"Here," she answered again, as meekly as before.

"But you do not understand. I am a friend, a very old friend of Miss Harland. She sent for me a long time ago, and I have just been able to come. I have been looking for her a great while, and I have only now found where she is. Tell me just where to look for her in this asylum."

The pale, thin hands unloosened the white strings about her throat and the stiff, starched bonnet was taken slowly from the head, and for the third time the sober voice spoke.

"Robert Strong, Ellen Harland is here."

It brought the great man weeping like a child at her feet.

He had been prepared for anything.

"Only not this, not this," he moaned, covering his face.

He wept at sight of the beautiful face so scarred and wan and wasted; the beautiful eyes so dulled and dimmed with pain; the beautiful voice so cold and passionless.

She tried to comfort him.

"Though the joys of this life are passed from me," she said, "I am content, thought I shall never walk out again in the world, I am at peace; and never henceforth, in this body, to be freed from pain, yet am I happy."

And Robert strong was comforted, for her voice had lost its deadness.

And he could go away and leave her; he could bear even to put an ocean between her and him; for he knew, though she had lost this puny world, she had gained an entrance to life everlasting.

George Wolfé.

Who is Your Double?

The Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* is offering £10, to be awarded to the five pairs of people who most closely resemble one another. Photographs must be sent in envelopes marked "Likeness" to reach the office of *P.W.* by Monday, March 20th.

It should be a very interesting thing to you to find out whether there is any person who exists with a physiognomy practically the same as your own.

All photographs should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope sufficiently large to carry them. For details of this competition you should look in the current number of *P.W.*

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THE WIZARD OF RED GULCH.

ARTHUR ARMSTRONG, of Montreal, was collector for the Golden Gate Iron Works builders of stamp-mills and other heavy machinery. He was on his first trip into one of the interior counties of California, a mountainous, mining district, where the coaches of the Beaverville, Red Gulch and Gold Run Stage Company are still the only medium of public conveyance. On this occasion Armstrong was the only passenger, for Joe Carter, the noted bandit, locally known as, "The Holy Terror," had robbed the stage the day before, and the incident had caused a temporary decline in the traffic of the line. Even Wells, Fargo and Company, had no treasure to forward that day, and therefore there was no shot-gun messenger aboard.

But the driver on the morning run, from the railway station into Beaverville, was a genial fellow, and, stimulated by a few draughts from Armstong's capacious flask and by some of his choice cigars, gave a most entertaining sketch of the robbery of the day before. Stopping at the spot where it had taken place, he described its minutest details. He pointed out the tree under which the passengers had been "lined up," while Carter had picked their pockets. Carter's style, although peremptory, was very quiet, and he had treated the passengers with great consideration, apologising for the annoying necessity of appropriating their valuables.

The driver alone had made resistance and had not been treated quite so gently. In fact, he had been "all shot up," and was now lying at Beaverville in a critical condition. His friends were in hot pursuit of Carter, intent upon lynching him if caught.

The road to Beaverville soon leaves the broad valleys that are traversed by the railroad, and winds for a distance through the foothills. Thence it penetrates the Sierras, leading deeper and deeper into a rugged country with small and scattered settlements most of which are mining-camps. It goes up and down long declivities, some abrupt, some gently sloping. A part of the way is shaded by magnificent forests of pine and fir. The robbery had occurred not far from Beaverville, a rude wayside station at which Armstrong and the driver arrived an hour or so after noon. Emerging from the dining-room after dinner, Armstrong found his friend, the driver, smoking on the little verandah.

"I leave you here," the driver remarked.

"Sorry," said Armstrong. "I appreciated your company this morning. Who takes the reins?"

"Jim Willing, one of the best drivers on the road, and a jolly good fellow. You'll enjoy the afternoon."

When the team, six wiry broncos, was brought from the stable, Armstrong took the former seat on the box. "Good-bye," he called to his late companion, reaching down a handful of cigars. "Have another?"

"Thanks. Good-bye."

As the horses were attached, Armstrong heard one of the men say that there wasn't a fresh horse left, not even a saddle horse. Everything had been pressed into service in the pursuit of Carter, who had headed for Nevada. "All ready!" called the foreman of the corral force. "Where's Willing?"

Just then a man whom Armstrong had not noticed climbed quickly into the driver's seat. Without waiting to gather up the reins, which were fastened to the brake, he yelled: "Go!" in a voice like the crack of a pistol, and the horses started at a gallop, throwing aside the two men holding them. With a quick motion the driver loosened the brake and grasped the reins. As Armstrong turned to wave a farewell, he caught a fleeting glimpse of a man excitably running after them and shouting: "Whoa! Stop!" But the driver urged the horses all the faster.

"Not much," he said. "I don't stop fer nobody. Let the duffer be on time if he wants to ride with me." A turn in the road and a clump of pines quickly shut their pursuers out of sight, but Armstrong fancied that he still heard them shouting.

Greatly amused at the independence of the man who dared thus defy the manager of the line, by leaving a passenger behind, Armstrong took a good look at the new driver. He was tall, wiry, and muscular; dark, with a stubby black beard, apparently of only a few days' growth. His face had a peculiar pallor, and his eyes were luminous, like a cat's in the dark. His head wobbled queerly from side to side, and the edges of a livid wound, or a deep scar, near the right temple, protruded below the slouched hat that was pulled low over the forehead. Altogether, his appearance was forbidding, even sinister

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and Armstrong decided that his friend of the morning must have been joking when he predicted a pleasant afternoon. The new driver seemed anything but sociable. To the proffer of the flask, refilled at the station, he answered:—

"No, thank you; not to-day."

"Have a cigar, then?"

"Thanks, but I don't care to smoke."

Armstrong lit a cigar and puffed in silence, the driver gave his whole attention to his horses, guiding them with wonderful skill. The road was now taking them through a deep cañon, with a stream rushing down the centre. There were many quick decents and sudden turns, but the driver made them all with the greatest ease, the pace slackening. Armstrong noticed, with a curious thrill of mingled apprehension and pleasurable excitement, that he took every possible chance of an accident yet always escaped. At the curves, he drew his horses in as closely as possible to the overhanging rocks, and sometimes the coach swung for a moment on two wheels, but it always righted itself, and the horses seemed to understand the slightest motion of the guiding hand.

Passing out of the cañon, they came to a stretch of more level country, and Armstrong improved the relatively slower gait by another attempt at conversation.

"How far," he asked, "to the next station?"

"'Bout twenty mile."

"Be there in two hours?"

"Certain; less than that if we hev any luck. Them hosses is good fer fourteen mile an hour, an' the road's down hill most of the way now."

"I suppose you have heard all about the hold-up yesterday?"

"Certain. I wuz there."

"What?"

"I wuz there. Saw the hull shootin' match."

Armstrong thought that the fellow was lying, but he didn't like to say so. He lit another cigar and continued.

"Were you one of the passengers yesterday?"

"No."

"You surely weren't the driver? He got shot."

"No. I wuzn't the driver."

"Nor the express messenger?"

"No."

"Well, then, if you were not the driver, nor the express messenger, nor a passenger, what were you doing there?"

"Jest loafin' round as a spectator."

More puzzled than ever, Armstrong inquired:

"How did you happen to be there?"

"Never you mind, stranger. Don't be too inquirin' 'bout other people's bizness. When I tell you that I wuz there, thet orter settle it."

Armstrong was hurt, not so much at his companions gruffness as at the fact that the genial driver of the morning had so grossly deceived him. Either this was true or else he was singularly unsuccessful in finding the right side of the rough nature with which he was trying to establish an acquaintance. He made one further effort.

"Now see here, Willing," he commenced.

"You're mistaken," the driver interrupted. "My uame ain't Willing."

"The deuce you say? Who are you then?"

"They call me the Wizard of Red Gulch, but my real name is William Murphy," said the driver quietly.

Armstrong sulked back into his seat, and in gloomy silence awaited further developments. These were soon forthcoming. They commenced to wind about the brow of a mountain preparatory to a descent on the other side of a "divide." There was forest on both sides of the road, and now and then they skirted the edges of ravines.

"I'll tell you how I got my name," said the driver still in a quiet monotonous tone. "I kin do things with hosses an' coaches sech ez no other feller ever done. I'll soon show you my greatest act. Jest over the hill here we go down all the way for 'bout a mile. Pretty steep, too. They call it Long Cañon. 'Bout the middle there's a stretch of a quarter of a mile where the bluff on this side is straight down five hundred to a thousand feet. Narrow road. Jest 'bout the middle of this there's a big boulder right on the ragged edge. I turns them hosses loose an' makes it at a gallop. Ev'ry trace on this side an' both wheels hez to graze thet rock 'thout hittin' hard enough to throw us over. See?"

No, Armstrong didn't see, and didn't want to see. He was convinced now that he was travelling with a maniac. But it was too late to interfere. They had entered upon the narrow road indicated, with a sheer wall of granite at their left, and a plunge into unknown depths at their right. Armstrong caught glimpses of the tops of trees far below them, and fancied that he heard the roaring of a torrent at the bottom. He shut his eyes in despair; then opened them again, impelled by a horrible fascination. Yes, there was the boulder just ahead. The brake was jammed down hard but the horses were plunging merrily along, their heads in the air their hoofs flying, quivering with excitement. The coach swayed and lurched, and the man held the reins, his eyes fixed intently on the leaders, leaning away forward in his seat, was calling with explosive emphasis, which seemed to lift the broncos into the air: "Go! Vamos! Vamos! Git out o' here!"

They swept past the boulder. Armstrong saw the traces touch and bound away and heard the hubs of the wheels grate against it. A few moments later the danger was past. The horses had swung around a turn in the road and were trotting quietly upon a space that was nearly level. Armstrong wiped the sweat from his face. A little later they emerged from the cañon and the view widened on either hand. Armstrong breathed more freely.

"I knowed I could do it agin," said the driver quietly "I done it every day fer three year—except once."

"What happened that time?" Armstrong stammered, with a desperate effort at unconcern.

The driver ignored the question.

"Would you mind holdin' the ribbons a minit?" he inquired. "I git off here."

Mechanically Armstrong took the reins. Without an instant's hesitation, the Wizard of Red Gulch stepped lightly from the swiftly-moving coach and waved a farewell to Armstrong, who looked back at him, bewildered. He had expected to see Murphy roll head over heels and stop with a broken neck. But nothing of the kind occurred.

Murphy stood for a moment with his tall figure sharply outlined in the glare of the dusty road-bed, a melancholy smile played upon his cadaverous features. Then he vanished, all in an instant, and Armstrong thought that he must have plunged into the chaparrel by the side of the road. He was uncertain whether he ought to stop. He had never driven a six team in his life, and he hesitated a moment between desire to be rid of the

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maniac and reluctance to assume responsibility. A second later the horses settled the question, for they broke into a gallop again, and Armstrong found himself occupied keeping them in the road. For the first time he fully appreciated the wonderful skill of his recent travelling companion.

Having gained a certain control, Armstrong kept the horses moving along and left the Wizard to his fate. He soon entered a better country, where there were ranches of some pretentions and evidences of prosperity, and was congratulating himself that he must be nearing Red Gulch, when he noticed a dozen horsemen coming swiftly towards him. At sight of the coach they separated and arranged themselves on either side of the road.

When Armstrong came up they pointed rifles at his head and ordered him to halt. He brought the six horses to a stop as quickly as he could. "Throw up your hands;" was the next command. Armstrong lost no time in complying. His captors were roughly clad, uncouth, but ready men of the mountains—not at all the sort to be trifled with. They surrounded the coach, swearing, laughing, cracking frontier jokes.

"Git up thar, Jim, an' hang to them broncos," said a burly fellow, evidently the leader. "Jim," slipped from his horse, handed the bridle to the man next in the line, mounted the box and picked up the reins which Armstrong had dropped.

"Now then, Sandy an' Tom, git up thar, too, an' search him fer weapons."

Two climbed upon the stage. After a hasty examination of Armstrong's clothing, they reported that there were no "shooting irons" upon him.

"The hell you say!" remarked the leader in a puzzled tone.

"Gentlemen," said Armstrong," may I inquire the reason for this outrage?"

"Now don't try to run no bluff on us, young man," was the reply. "We're out after ye, and we've got ye. Were a goin' to take yer inter Red Gulch, where ye'll have a fair trial. Fall in, boys. Go ahead Jim."

Escorted by the riders and closely watched by the men with him on the stage, Armstrong made his entry into Red Gulch an hour after his sudden deposition from the proud position of driver. On the way he gathered little information, every question being met with ridicule or with indifference. He inferred, however, from the little that was said, that he was accused of stealing the horses and the stage, and was supposed to be connected, in some mysterious way, with Joe Carter.

Red Gulch is a straggling mining village. The office of the stage company is flanked on one side by the post office and the general store, and on the other by the Blue Blood saloon. As the stage and its cavalry escort came swinging down the single narrow street of the place thirty or forty men and half grown boys rushed forward and surrounded them. Several were armed with revolvers ostentatiously protruding from pockets and belts. Their air of eager expectancy impressed Armstrong forcibly rather than pleasantly. At a word from Jim, when the stage stopped, he stepped to the ground. The crowd laughed and drew closer. A tall, old man, with a long, gray beard, a hooked nose, and an eye like a hawk's, waved them aside.

"Jedge," said the leader of the capturing party, "here's your man. We told ye thet we'd bring him in, dead or alive. He's a queer cuss. Didn't show a bit of fight. Cons'quently he's here to speak for himself. We'v searched him. We didn't find nothin' in the way of tools—no rifle, no revolver, not even a knife. He don't look like one of Carter's gang. But we'll turn him over to you fellers, an' you can try him. We've done our part. Now you do yourn. In my opinion, though, he ain't worth the price of a rope to hang him with."

With a look of infinite disgust and a wave of the hand which signified that he was done with the business, Armstrong's captor delivered him into the custody of the law, as represented by Judge Billings, of Red Gulch. Something in Armstrong's appearance seemed to strike the judge as irresistibly comical, and he joined in the laughter of the crowd as he laid a sinewy hand, at the end of a long, lean arm, lightly upon Armstrong's shoulder.

"So you're the bold, bad man," he said, "thet runs off with a stage an' six hosses, be you?"

"I don't understand you, sir. There must be some mistake," Armstrong replied with dignity, and shaking off the detaining arm.

"Wa'al, they telephoned from Beaverville to look out fer a light haired, doodish duffer who hed run off with the coach, an' here you be, answerin' the description all right."

"Did they also telephone from Beaverville that they had sent the stage out with a lunatic for a driver?" Armstrong demanded angrily.

"No—o. They didn't say that. But mebbe thet's right. Boys, what d'ye say?"

"Looks like thet wuz 'bout right," said one.

"Let's try him for hoss stealin', anyway," said another.

"Ask him where his friend, Carter is," suggested a third.

"Gentlemen," said Armstrong, "you are evidently labouring under a misapprehension. If you will devote a moment's reflection to this subject, you will at once see that I could have no possible use for a coach and six horses. I have not been guilty of larceny, as you appear to surmise. I simply took the reins from the hands of a crazy driver, who deserted me several miles back, and I have brought the property of the Beaverville, Red Gulch and Gold Run Stage Company to the place where it belongs. It is I who have suffered, not you or the company. I have been frightened out of my wits this afternoon, and if you will give me your attention for a few minutes, I will prove to you that your suspicions in regard to me are entirely unfounded."

Thereupon, Armstrong related the story of his ride. When he described the Wizard and his reckless driving, the crowd laughed uproariously. They tossed their hats in the air and yelled like madmen. Armstrong became convinced that most of them were drunk. No one could tell what freak would seize them next. He was frightened. His voice faltered; his knees shook; but he managed to carry his narrative to the end, realising, as he told how the Wizard had dropped off from the stage and vanished—he did not know whither—that his auditors had a reasonable foundation for their mirthful incredulity.

"You're a good one," Judge Billings remarked, when Armstrong had finished. "Well, boys," he continued, "come along an' let's talk it over. We'll settle this thing right now."

The crowd drew a little apart, and, left alone, Armstrong took a seat on the steps of the shanty that served for a stage office. He caught snatches of the comments passed upon him during the animated discussion which followed. They were such as these:

"Slickest liar ever been in these parts."

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While this proceeding was in progress, six fresh horses had been attached to the stage, and the new driver, a ruddy, cheerful individual, was drawing the reins over them for another start. Armstrong did not stir. The driver called "All aboard!"

Judge Billing came back to Armstrong.

"The boys," he said, "hez found ye guilty ez charged, but with extenooatin' circumstances. I hopes you'll excuse th' informality of the proceedin's. I'm a jestice of the peace, but in these parts the wheels of jestice is mostly greased by public opinion. Some of our influential citizens air out after Carter. Mebbe that's jest eez well fer you. If the boys thet's here don't object I kin let ye go. Some of them thinks you're in partners with Carter, but they ain't proved it. We've decided to turn you loose if you'll stan' treat all round."

Without stopping to discuss the equity of this decision Armstrong willingly acquiesced. Everybody filed into the Blue Blood saloon, and Armstrong paid for drinks for all. Then he climbed slowly to a seat beside the new driver, nd they started amid cheers and rattling farewell of revolver shots.

Armstrong and the new driver rode for ten minutes in silence. Then the driver said: "Thet wuz a dead cold bluff of yourn pardner. But it worked all right jest the same. You see the Wizard hez been dead this two weeks—two weeks ago to-day he wuz killed. He use to hev the trick you tell of—skinned past thet boulder every day for ten years. Skeered more'n a hundred wimmin passingers inter fits. Comp'ny discharged him half-a-dozen times, but took him on ag'in, fer he wuz all right 'cept fer thet one thing. But two weeks ago to-day he wuz a leetle full, I reckon. He druv too close to the boulder an' plunked right inter it. Threw him off'n the the seat an' inter the Gulch. Killed him dead."

"Nevertheless," said Armstrong quietly, "I rode with him to-day."

"The boys wuz hot 'bout your stealin' this here outfit afore you come up. Thought it mebbe you wuz mixed up with Carter in some way. Consid'ble talk of lynchin' ye. But you see, you didn't do no harm. Hosses blowed a leetle, but thet don't count. I reckon they decided that you wuz crazy. Mountain air makes people crazy sometimes. No. You can't come it over me. I see Murphy arter he was picked up. His head wuz smashed an' his neck wuz broke. He wuz dead ez Cap'n Kidd. We planted him in Beaverville.

"Thanks; I don't c re if I do. Here's to your good health. Thet's good stuff, too. Will I hev a cigar? Cert. You ain't a-ridin' with no fool this trip, mister. Ain't thet lovely sunset, though? See how it flames along the mountains?"

In course of time Armstrong completed his tour and returned to Montreal, but for weeks afterwards, in his dreams he took wild drives down Long Cañon, in company with the phantom Wizard of Red Gulch.

Arthur Pigott.

"MADE-UP PARAGRAPH" COMPETITION.

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When the table is complete post it to us, and the six people who make up the best paragraph, in the opinion of the Editor, will be awarded £1 each. Only two members of the same family may insert their names.

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BOOK III.—CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING OLERON.

CHAPTER VII.

How the Ledge was turned into a fort: how it was defended: how three of the besieged got out: and how they came across the chief sorcerer to the island of Erma.

THOUGH the invaders were doubtless anxious enough to meet the whole Erman force massed together, the invaded steadfastly refused to risk annihilation in another pitched battle. They retreated before every strong advance, and only hazarded fighting that was little more than skirmish.

The island was large, and furrowed with valleys running out of the bare rocks of the central peak. If the army of Daji straggled much, many members of it would certainly be cut off by those who knew the ground, and could plant good ambushes; and besides, even by straggling, it could not have covered so large an area.

Of course the Ermans had been obliged to desert houses and other possessions of that kind. But come to think of it, the sacrifice was not a very large one. The Dajians might burn huts and furniture certainly. But new huts could be run up in a day or so, as good or better than the old; and when one's household goods consist of one net hammock per head, and a few calabashes, and one's wealth of a dozen or so yards of *tappa* cloth, the materials for producing which all grow close at hand, well, a man is not in reality much the poorer for the loss of such at all. For no one could destroy the forests, and no one could catch all the birds in the air, or dredge all the fish from the sea.

So the Dajians ate, drank, and used what they wanted, destroyed what they could of the balance, and had perforce to leave the remainder—the larger part—untouched. And between whiles they amused themselves with hunting Ermans, without much success or excitement, except sometimes when they found the tables reversed, and got hunted in their turn.

This desultory warfare lasted for well nigh a month without any signs of its coming to a conclusion. The natives became habituated to their life in the woods after a couple of day's experience—indeed the change was a trifling one to them—and preferred to remain as they were, to making any desperate attempt to regain possession of the island again.

But King Oleron felt deeply the disgrace of having a foreign foe quartered in his land, and was continually inciting his subjects to harass the invader by every means in their power.

In one of their sorties, if one may so call them, from a snug erie amongst the mountains, our three Europeans had a very near shave of being taken prisoners. They had marched down Maantee's valley one night with a company of natives, intending to attack a body of Dajians, who had encamped on the coast. But as these inconsiderate savages had shifted their quarters, without giving due notice of the fact, the surprise came from the wrong side. The sortie party found themselves in a tight place, for the Dajians were on them both front and rear; and at first it looked as if the Ermans and their white allies were going to be massacred to a man. But principally by the herculean efforts of this latter trio, they cut their way through, and the survivors of them made for the Ledge with as much dignity as they could muster. I'm afraid it was more of a run than a retreat; but the enemy was at least four to one, which forms some excuse. However, once on the Ledge, the top of the path leading thereto was easy to defend, as Sneyd and O'Neill taught conclusively to the vanguard of the pursuers; and so the survivors of these fell back and told their comrades, who contented themselves with posting a strong guard at the foot of the ascent.

"The Ledge makes a very decent fort, as Sandy said it would," Sneyd remarked. "It's easy enough to defend it against escalade. The only question is how far we are provisioned against a siege."

"There's just twenty-two mouths of us, all told," said O'Neill, "an' Mytto reports that three of 'em are in a bad way av Dochter Sandy's any judge. The crops is all stole or spoiled, for these ugly haythens trampled down what they couldn't ate or carry off; but we shall find some taro left by huntin' for it, an' there's bananas they couldn't reach, an' the spring, which of course they couldn't stop. I don't think there's much fear on the score of grub. It'll last us a week wid care, an' we should conthrive some manes of givin' 'em leg bail before that time's out."

House and all fixtures and improvements were burnt or otherwise destroyed, but this was a minor detail. They could be replaced when the time came, very easily, and in the meanwhile they were but little missed. The proprietors of the Ledge paid but small heed to the havoc around them. They were too busily engaged in making themselves obnoxious to the new neighbours who had taken up quarters down below. O'Neill sighed for artillery. With half a dozen 18-pounders he could surprise the beseigers not a little. Such engines of warfare were of course unattainable; but Sneyd, casting back his memory over old reading recalled the form of one or two missile-throwing implements in use before the invention of gunpowder. Having plenty of strength and material at hand, he con-

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They started practice with these infernal machines.

structed three pretty powerful ballistas on the edge of the platform. The besiegers saw the erections being set up, and thought, so Mytto said, that they were gods, and consequently stared at them fixedly. Each was trained as accurately as inexperience would allow of, and loaded with a great lump of rock. The levers were drawn down by their windlasses, and released. The three projectiles sung through the air, and one of them fell amongst a knot of the spectators, knocking several over, and killing four outright.

O'Neill, to whose lucky marksmanship this successful shot had been due, rubbed his hands delightedly. "Begob," he cried, "we'll pick 'em off pace-male." But the Dajians were not such fools as to allow this. They had never seen a ballista before, or heard of one, but the weapon's power was obvious, and they withdrew hurriedly. A second discharge, trained to a higher elevation, sent them to a still more respectful distance. But, at a quarter of a mile away, they were out of range, despite the lofty position the shot was hurled from.

So to prevent time falling heavily on their hands, the besieged added to their artillery four great cross-bows. The bows were stout trees, the strings thick rope. They were drawn by rude winches made for the purpose, and fired a bolt—or to be more explicit, a bamboo stake—four feet long, fire-hardened at the pointed end, and feathered at the other extremity with flat wooden vanes. They started practice with these infernal machines after dark, and, by aiming at the watch-fires, contrived to split some half-dozen unfortunates before the others understood where this new pest arrived from, and took themselves even farther away still. In fact, when morning lighted the scene, the besiegers were seen to have deserted even the hill opposite the Ledge, and were encamped in two bodies, one up and one down the valley, and each at least half a mile in crow line from the obnoxious fort.

A larger and stronger cross-bow was made, but it wouldn't throw the distance. The Dajians could evidently be annoyed with missiles no longer. O'Neill took this as very mean on their part. But Sneyd said, "Small blame to them for refusing to stand up and be shied at if they can't hit back."

"But," grumbled the Irishman, "the dirty bastes are just goin' to thry and starve us out."

"Of course they're going to try it," replied Sneyd.

"And they'll do that same av we don't interfere to help ourselves. There's ownly two things to prevent it that I can see. Either it must rain grub, or else his honour, the King, must collect his troops, an' raise the siege."

"Either of which," Sneyd added, "is equally likely."

"It's no use asking for terms," said O'Neill. "We must just hould out till our bellies are empty, an' then make a bolt for it under cover of the darkness. Some of us may slip through av they hit on a soft place in the line of pickets, an' the rest must just die as hard as they can —fightin'."

"It's no use waiting till we're weak from want of food," said Sneyd. "I move that if to-night is decently dark, we make a dash for it without further loss of time."

There was silence for a minute or so, which Sandy broke by saying:

"Why shouldn't we try and get up the cliff at the back?"

There was no verbal answer to his suggestion, but, reading from their faces what each thought, he went on:

"I don't think it's impossible. One could scale this flat, vertical rock with a long bamboo ladder, and then, as far as one can judge from below, there are crannies and fissures to give foothold right away to the very top. We might draw off the whole force that way, evacuate the fort this very night, and none of the Dajians be a bit the wiser till morning. But what do you say, Mytto?"

Mytto shook his head most decisively. "Can't be done," he said. "'Out of sunshine into oven,' as King Oleron would say. Devil lives up there, and he's worse than all the Dajians."

Sneyd, who thought the plan distinctly feasible, asked angrily, "What nonsense is this?" But Mytto, beyond reiterating that the cliff was a favourite and much-used residence of the original fiend himself, and stating his unalterable determination not to scale it, vouchsafed no further explanation. And his fellow-countrymen were equally unsatisfactory.

At first the three Europeans thought they were in honour bound to stay and share the other defenders' inevitable fate. Deserting one's comrades to save one's own skin always seems cowardly, even though the said comrades have refused, through sheer funk, to avail themselves of a simple

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avenue of escape. But then it dawned upon them that if they could get out, they might have sufficient influence to gather a force that could raise the siege, and at any rate they could reprovision the garrison from above under cover of darkness. For either of these purposes it was necessary for the whole three of them to go. But their absence would make no difference to the defence. The point where the path from below debouched on to the little plateau had been strengthened artificially during the siege, and in its then state two men could hold it easily against an army. An attack could only be made in single file, and as each man appeared he would most certainly be brained. And beside the fact that their muscles were superfluous, their appetites were distinctly a burden.

So they set about making the wherewithal to scale the vertical cliff at the back of the Ledge.

A regular ladder of the requisite length proved impracticable, principally because there was not enough stuff to make it easily procurable. So they lashed single poles together, for which purpose there was a sufficiency of long stout bamboos, and notched them at intervals. Nearly two hundred feet were required, and to raise this in one piece was quite out of the question. However, by dint of great care and contrivance, one-third was reared up on end, and rested against the cliff.

O'Neill climbed cautiously to the top, hauled up another section after him, hoisted it into position, and lashed it there. Then instead of letting down his rope for the next piece, he came to the ground in person.

"Get me some short sharpened lengths," said he. "There's heaps of crannies to stick 'em in, an' av the long po'e gets a side lashing every here and there, it's less likely to let one go by the run than it is at pre-ent."

The work went on slowly, now one, now another of the trio taking his turn, but at last the top section reached a narrow ledge, whence the final ascent seemed practicable, if not easy.

The task had taken many hours, for in the darkness, which was very intense, one had to exercise great caution; and by the time the three Europeans had got on to the solid footing above, they judged that dawn could not be far off. So they started off on the upward climb without a minute's delay. The rocks were steep, bare, and greasy with dew. In many cases one had to be hoisted up by the other two, who in turn were dragged on to the higher level. Once they were obliged to build a little cairn of stones, collected with great trouble, before even this means of scaling one of the higher steps was possible. They had each several narrow escapes of slipping, and a fall would only finish in the valley below. And several times when foiled in one direction, they had to turn back, and try another way. But thanks to having hard tireless muscles, heads that no dizzy height would turn, and seamen's knack of climbing, they had got over the worst by the time dawn began to cast its grey shadow over the eastern waters, and had scrambled into cover behind some craggy rocks before the sun had sprung up to commence his daily round.

"It's meself that's been up some quare places," said the Irishman, wiping the perspiration from his face with the back of a hard freckled hand, "but for all-round bastleness, this about whips the lot of 'em. An' how we're goin' to get down again's more than I can tell. It's about lucky Mytto an' the other chaps didn't thry to come wid us, or it's broken necks they'd had be the toime they got to the top. Begob, I wish they could ha' come though. How powerful sorry for themselves them Daji bhoys would ha' been to find thay were kaping guard over a nest that had neither egg, chick, nor old bird in it."

"There's one thing we're overlooked," said Sandy. "That bamboo pole can't very well avoid being seen."

"That's awkward," remarked Sneyd. "If we come back here to-night with supplies, we may find a party of these beggers ready to cut us off."

"Then," said Sandy, "the sooner we find our own people, and persuade a gang of them to make a night attack on the besiegers, the better. We shall only have half to deal with, as they are in two bodies, and if Mytto is sharp—which, to give him is due, he generally is—he will rush out and join us with his men at the first attack."

"Sandy," said the ex-cornet, "you are a great general. Come, let's be moving without further loss of time. We've had quite long enough rest to get our winds back again."

They crossed the ridge and sharp *arrête* of bare stone, and began cautiously descending the other side. The climbing was very hard. All their wits were required to find the safest path. Once down the rocky steep, they would reach a gently sloping plateau of turf, and then might examine the prospect below at their leisure. O'Neill was the first in the line of descent. The others were coming cautiously along a few yards behind him. The Irishman reached the easy ground, halted, and held up his hand for silence. Sneyd and Sandy Carmichael stopped dead. O'Neill listened for a minute or so, and then beckoned for them to join him. They did so, carefully, being mindful to make no noise.

"There was somebody talking just round that rock," he whispered.

The three unslung their clubs and listened. For fully ten minutes not a sound broke the silence. Then a hard grating voice made a remark, and another, a feebler one, replied.

"That's Ebry who spoke first," said the Irishman. "I'd know it in any crowd. I'd know it if I heard it in Sackville

O'Neill climbed cautiously to the top.

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Street, Dhublin." With which sagacious remark he pressed forward, followed by his companions, and the three of them found themselves in the presence of the chief sorcerer of the island of Erma.

CHAPTER VIII.

How the three Europeans refreshed themselves: how the chief sorcerer turned traitor: and how Sneyd and O Neill got a respite from the oven just in the nick of time.

To say that the chief sorcerer showed surprise at the meeting, is to put the case mildly. He jumped up from the bed of leaves on which he had been sitting, ran backwards till his shoulders banged against the rock, and crouched there with both hands up before his face as though to ward off an expected blow. He might have mistaken his unexpected visitors for Dajians; but that does not disguise the fact that he made a most pitiable exhibition of cowardice.

"All right, Ebry," laughed Sneyd, "sorry for scaring you, but we've not come with murderous intent. Your time hasn't arrived yet. Who is that you were talking to? Oh, I see, the plump little assistant. Hurt, too, poor beggar. Hullo! why, there's a regular cave behind here. Keep house in this outlandish spot, do you? Well, that explains what Mytto said about the mountain being the abode of the devil. But, I say, my good Ebry, you might be a little more hospitable. We're simply famishing. Just escaped from the Philistines over the other side. Spin you the yarn afterwards. But give us some grub first, or we shall break through our usual rule, and follow the custom of the neighbourhood, by turning cannibals and eating you."

The chief sorcerer, with his uncomely visage screwed into a vinegary and obviously forced smile, set before the hungry fugitives a large calabash full of well-seasoned *poce*, and then when that had vanished before their desperate inroads, he produced three great pines, and a palm basket full of custard apples, with which vegetarian meal they perforce had to satisfy themselves, as there was no meat forthcoming.

During the meal, Ebry related incidents of his own prowess, showed an incised wound at the back of his scalp, and said that but for him the Ermans would have been swept into the sea long ago. Which statement, as the chief sorcerer had not been in evidence in any of the engagements they had fought in, the Europeans had to receive on trust; though taking into account that the scalp wound was evidently dealt from behind, and remembering what a timid front he had shown on the enemy's arrival, they swallowed these deeds of derring do with many grains of salt.

There was no doubt, however, that the plump assistant sorcerer was badly hurt, and after dressing the head of his superior officer, Sandy pulled off the rude bandage from the little fellow's ribs, and showed a ghastly wound about the middle of the right side. He examined it carefully, but no one could tell the diagnosis from his face. His features were absolutely expressionless. Then he washed the gash, put on fresh compressers, and binding them firmly in place, went across to the other side of the cave, and joined his companions.

"Well?" said Sneyd in English. "How is he?"

"Desperately bad. He says the spear 'bit deep,' and it must have done."

"Will he pull through?"

"I can't say. But we must hope for the best."

"A regular doctor's reply. That means, I suppose, that your patient is going to die"

Producing a coil of grass rope his captors lashed him to a pole of bamboo.

"He'll have a small chance if he's left to Ebry's tender mercies. That blear-eyed ruffian has nearly killed him as it is."

"I wonder if we couldn't get some of the women down to nurse him?" mused O'Neill. "This place is snug enough. There'd be small chance o' them Dajians beatin' 'em up here."

"Let's ask the landlord," suggested Sneyd. "I say, Ebry, your friend here won't have much of a chance unless he's better looked after. Can't you find some woman or other to come and take care of him? I'm sure there must be scores sleeping out every night under the stars who would be glad of quarters here."

The chief sorcerer's face showed plain distaste for the proposal. But he did not refuse to entertain it. He temporised, and said he would consider the matter, and then he asked what were the white men's plans for the immediate future.

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"Well," said Sneyd, "notwithstanding the demands of your pressing hospitality, we do not propose inflicting ourselves upon you for long. You see, Mytto and the other men, who are holding the Ledge, demand our first attention. Either we must collect a band of men strong enough to make the Dajians raise the siege for a sufficiently long time to allow the defenders to get out, or we must contrive to smuggle in provisions."

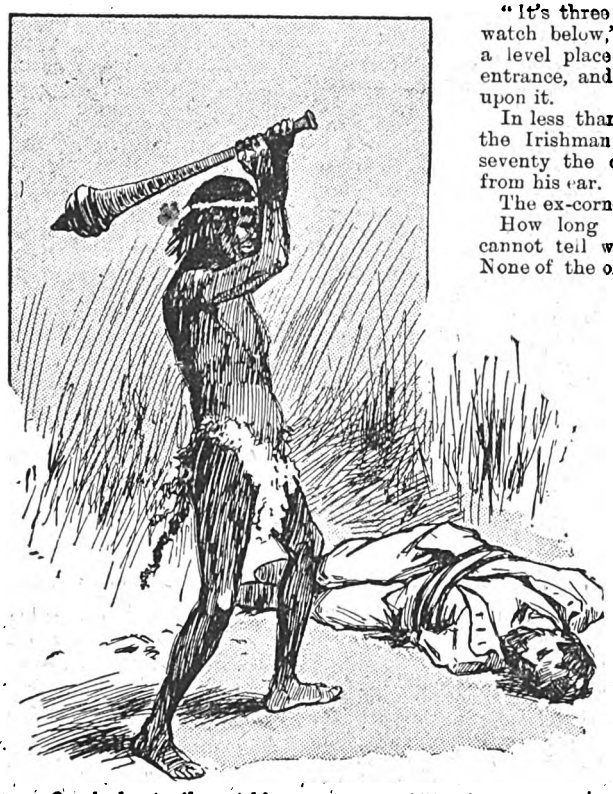
"Could they hold out if they had food?" inquired Ebry.

"Well victualled, they would defend the place till they died of old age."

"Then," exclaimed the chief sorcerer, "this is what must be done. I will go now and command that a force be raised. None dare refuse Ebry's command. In four hours I shall be back here. As soon as darkness falls, you shall return with what food you can carry, and I will come with you, bearing more. On the second night from now, a force of Ermans will surprise the men of Daji who hold the valley. We shall be on the look-out, and when the shouts of war reach us, we will sally forth and join the conflict."

"Bravo, Ebry!" exclaimed O'Neill, hitting the chief sorcerer encouragingly on the back. "You've more pluck in yez than a dead mouse has."

The sorcerer grinned constrainedly at the compliment, and said he would set out on his errand without further delay. Sneyd proposed accompanying him, but the man begged to go alone. There were Dajians about everywhere, he said, and Sneyd would most certainly be seen by them. He, himself, would not be noticed. He was accustomed to slipping through undergrowth like a snake.



One had actually got his weapon over O'Neill's head.

This last remark was very true, and the three Europeans resolved to stay where they were, take a few hours much needed sleep so as to be thoroughly recruited for their arduous climb after dark.

"I shall be back long before it is time for us to start over the hill," said Ebry, as he took himself off, "and I will show you then where we can gather the supplies. The place is close at hand." And with that he took himself off.

"Before you lie down," said Sandy, who was kneeling beside the wounded man, moistening his bandage, "I wish you'd give me a lift with this poor fellow. He's very feverish, and I think he'd be more comfortable further in the cave, where it's cooler."

The others readily complied, and raising the assistant conjuror as carefully and gently as they were able, they carried him round a couple of angles, and deposited him on a couch of leaves in a cool, gloomy recess.

"Hullo," exclaimed Sneyd, looking round him, "we are in that old scamp's laboratory, or whatever he chooses to call it. Look, here's all his conjuring tackle littered about. I say, Sandy, as you've starting dabbling in magic, you'd better overhaul this stuff when you've a little time, and try and find out how that clever snake trick was done. You might be able to step into Ebry's shoes some day when he retires on a competency, and subsides into private life."

"Perhaps I will, if the opportunity occurs," replied Sandy, with one of his rarely indulged-in smiles. "But not now. I'm far too sleepy at present. In fact, I should think none of us will be sorry to turn in for an hour or so."

"It's three weeks since I had a regular watch below," yawned O'Neill, looking for a level place on the cave floor near the entrance, and then settling himself down upon it.

In less than thirty seconds Sneyd heard the Irishman snoring, and in less than seventy the discordant noise had faded from his ear.

The ex-cornet was fast asleep himself.

How long they slept, I am afraid I cannot tell with any degree of accuracy. None of the old records mention the time; and, as they ignore it, I suppose they themselves are ignorant on the point also. Sneyd said that he had just closed his eyes, when O'Neill's yell awoke him; but then that evidence is eminently untrustworthy. A good many of us are ready to declare that we haven't been in bed a minute, when some heartless person says it's 8.30 a.m., and quite time to get up. However, this does not particularly matter, as the method of their awakening is clearly told. The ex-cornet was roused by the sound of a terrific yell, opened his eyes, and attempted to rise at the same time. Instantly twenty hands seized him, and bore him back again. He tried to struggle, but found he couldn't move a limb; and ten savage faces above him glowed with satisfaction. He had spoken somewhat scoffingly of the Philistines overnight. The Philistines were upon him with a vengeance now.

Producing a coil of grass rope, his captors lashed him to a pole of bamboo, and then two of them, raising the ends on their shoulders, he was carried into the open. He turned his head, and saw O'Neill in similar plight beside him.

"Where's Sandy?" he asked.

"Haven't seen him," replied the Irishman, "or heard him."

"How did these fellows come?"

"That cursed informer Ebry brought 'em. He's just behind yez now. They grabbed me when I was asleep. I shouted to wake you, an' hit out. But it was no use. I did damage the ugliness of a few of 'em, but there was too many to give a bhoy a dacent chance."

"Are you hurt?"

"No, me skin's sound enough, praise be, though that's not much, when one's trussed up like this. It will be small mercy we've got to expect; but begob, av they'd allow me five minutes conversation wid that thraitor Ebry, an' one fist cast adrift, it's meself that 'd go along wid 'em, like a lamb to the meat-shop."

Sneyd added a sentence or two, in which his opinion of the chief sorcerer was put in strongish phrase, and then asked his companion in misfortune what could have become of Sandy.

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"It's meself that's been wondering," replied the Irishman. "I expected to find him being jumped upon beside me. But he wasn't there. The Dajians were surprised too at not grabbing him, and so was Ebry, for he went away back into the cave and evidently examined every cranny carefully. It can't be that he got wind of their coming, and made a bolt for it, for, of course, he'd have warned us too. So where has he got to, I can't for the life of me imagine. However, the odds are he's got clear away somewhere, and if he has, you may lay your teeth on it he'll bear a hand to get us out of this mess, av that same's possible. There's no leveller head than Sandy Carmichael's on Erma this minute."

The Dajians bore their prisoners along with but scant ceremony. Every time bearers were changed—and this happened pretty frequently—bump! went the helpless bodies on to the ground; so that by the time they were finally shot down in the middle of their captors' encampment, both were tolerably bruised. But such minor details as bumps and abrasures, are little thought of by men who expect within the hour to be killed and grilling in an oven. Their minds were working at full strain to find a means of escape; but as a preliminary to every plan, they must first have use of arms and legs; and wriggle and strain how they would, nothing would come adrift. The lashings had been passed by no 'prentice hand, and every now and then a savage would catch sight of their strivings, and grin with cheerful derision, and recommend them to take matters stoically. And so after making the fetters cut deeply into their flesh, in at least a dozen places, they desisted from the useless effort.

Still it was rather maddening work to lie still, and see those human demons dig a couple of neat holes in the earth with bamboo spades; to watch them line the sides of the cavities with stones; to note bearers bringing in armfuls of wood; to see the fuel placed carefully into position and lighted; and to be fully aware all the time, to what end these deliberate proceedings tended. I say it would be hard for any one to be cool and phlegmatic under such trying circumstances; and I fully own that both Sneyd and O'Neill would have gone pale if their skins had not been too sunburnt to admit of such a change, and that they actually were so upset, that the cold perspiration of pure funk literally gushed from them in streams.

But at the very last moment when the blazing wood was being taken out of the earth ovens, when the stones within were dully red; when the feasters were beginning to stroll up;—at the last moment, I say, Providence intervened. Another ten seconds and the intervention would have been too late. Two brawny savages had come up, club in hand, to prepare the roast for the oven—to consummate the sacrifice. One had actually got his weapon raised over O'Neill's fiery head, when a shout from the outskirts of the camp made him stay his hand.

A messenger was running up as fast as legs would carry him. "We go back," he panted, "to Daji. There has been a battle, and our men ran. They are running even now. The Ermans have killed many, and are chasing the others into the sea. Fly whilst there is still time."

The two butchers hesitated for a moment.

"Take the prisoners," said the messenger. "They will be a comfort for us when we reach Daji."

(To be continued.)

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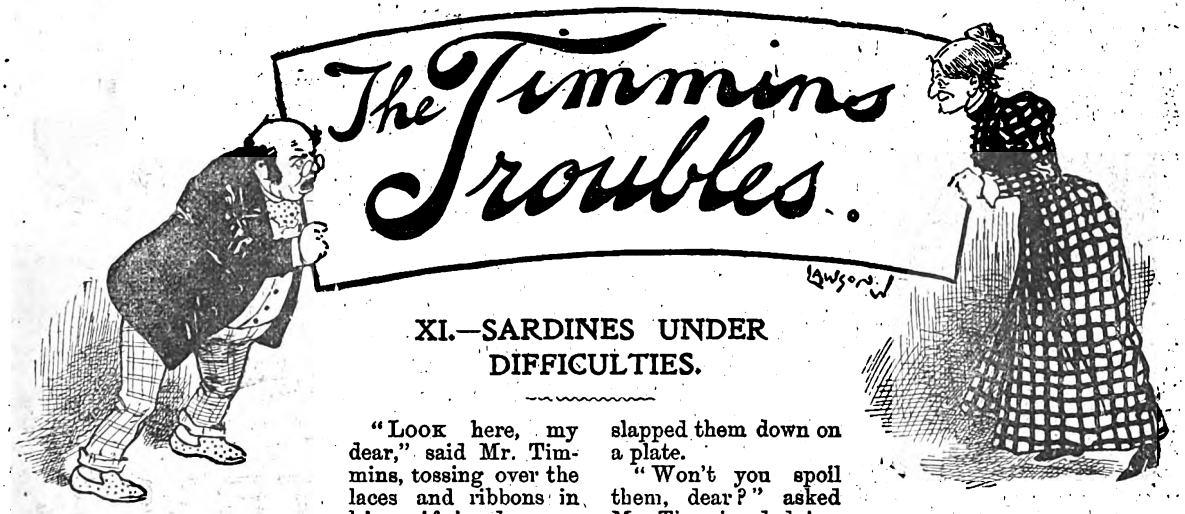

XI.—SARDINES UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

"Look here, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, tossing over the laces and ribbons in his wife's drawer, "what's become of the can-opener? I don't see it anywhere."

"What do you want it for?" asked Mrs. Timmins, fluttering up to protect her trinkets, and trying to gain a little time.

"I want to open some sardines with it," retorted Mr. Timmins, abandoning the drawer and hunting through the work-basket. "D'yer think I want to comb my hair or write a letter with it? Well, I don't. I want some sardines. What have you done with it?"

"You might take your big knife," recommended Mrs. Timmins. "The large blade is just the thing for that."

Mr. Timmins seized the knife and bored away at one corner of the box, while his wife looked on with considerable distress.

"Hadn't you better put a paper under the box? You'll get the oil all over the tablecloth," suggested Mrs. Timmins.

"No, I won't either," said Mr. Timmins, as the knife plunged through and the oil spattered. "Serve you right if it did," he continued, ploughing away at the tin, while the oil flew in all directions. "It would teach you to put the can opener where you could find it. What kind of housekeeping do you call this, anyhow?" he yelled, as the blade slipped out and closed upon his fingers.

"Did you hurt yourself, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins anxiously.

"No, I didn't hurt myself," shrieked Mr. Timmins; "the knife only struck the bone. Give me some ether!" he howled. "Fetch me some chloroform! D'you s'pose I'm going to saw at this box any more without an anæsthetic? Have you got an idea I'm going to chip off a couple of dozen fingers without something to deaden the pain? Where's the laughing gas? Give me some laughing gas while I extract these fish."

And Mr. Timmins pranced round the room, and then jabbed the knife into the box again, and ripped away as though he was run by steam.

"No use to hide away from me!" he yelled, hacking at the box with all his might. "I know you're in there, and there can't be any sardine that ever was built able to get away from me. Come out, I tell ye!" And he seized a fish by the tail and slung it across the room. "You're transacting business with Timmins now!" And he clawed out a handful of mashed sardines and slapped them down on a plate.

"Won't you spoil them, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins, dodging the flying heads and tails. "They won't be very good if you open them that way."

"Oh, won't they?" howled Mr. Timmins. "P'raps you've got an idea I ought to climb under them and lift 'em out. Maybe you want me to get into that box with a boat and take 'em out with a casting net. Well, I won't. Give me the tongs. I want that fish at the bottom. Where's the tongs? Gone to get married to the tin opener, haven't they?" and Mr. Timmins grabbed another fish and flung it into the grate.

"Be patient, my dear," said Mrs. Timmins soothingly; "make the opening a little wider, and they'll come out."

"Patient!" shouted Mr. Timmins. "P'raps you want me to sing Dr. Watt's hymns to 'em. Come out of that!" and with a wrench Mr. Timmins hauled off the top and disclosed the mangled remains of his enemies. "Now give me a lemon; quick now."

"Upon my word, my dear, I don't believe there's a lemon in the house," stammered Mrs. Timmins. "I had one——"

"Oh, you had one," exclaimed Mr. Timmins, "only you're just out. You only need an awning and a family on the top floor to be a grocery shop! D'ye suppose I'm going to eat these sardines raw? Think I'm going to swallow these fish alive? Gimme something to put with 'em will ye?"

"What would you like, my dear?" queries Mrs. Timmins.

"Ink! Fetch me some ink! Can't ye find some laudanum somewhere?" and Mr. Timmins projected himself into the closet and pranced out with a bottle of arnica. "There," he growled, as he dashed the contents over the sardines, "there's your fish all ready for you," and Mr. Timmins flopped into his easy chair and picked up the paper.

"Don't you want some sardines?" asked Mrs. Timmins after a long pause.

"No, I don't," growled Mr. Timmins.

"But this is a fresh box," said Mrs. Timmins, displaying the sardines in neat layers.

"How'd you get it open?" demanded Mr. Timmins.

"With the tin-opener," replied his wife. "I found it in your tool-box, where you put it to sharpen it."

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER LV.

MOSTLY MATRIMONIAL.

"IRENE!"

"Yes, dear."

"What does it mean when a spider runs across the window?"

"Oh, where is he? Are you sure he is running straight across? For goodness' sake don't blow at him."

Irene Vyne came quickly from the comfortable chair in which she had been enjoying "a good read"—the first novel from Mudie's for over six months—and stood by Ethel's side to see the tiny insect, so unusual a visitor in a West-end drawing-room, rapidly scudding across the broad window-pane. He deviated neither to right nor left but travelled off towards the frame as though a nice juicy fly were well within sight and safely caught in his web.

Irene heaved a sigh of deep satisfaction.

Irene Vyne came quickly from the chair.

"Really," she cried, "a somewhat close acquaintanceship with Tommy Atkins has made me superstitious, and I am so glad that this has happened."

"Well?" said Ethel. "Don't be silly, but tell me at once. I saw him first."

"It portends," said Irene, with mock seriousness, "a long journey for a dear friend, a very long journey in your case, and a shorter one in mine, and that nothing on earth will stop either from coming straight here."

Ethel looked sadly and wistfully at her friend as she heard the explanation of the spider's transit over the glass. "It may be true enough for you, dear," she said, with a slight catch in her voice, "as Teddy is within ten hours of London, but Frank is on the staff in Russia, and the "TIMES" says we will be compelled to keep an army of occupation there quite a long time, until the political settlement of the country is completed. Poor little spider! He meant well, I am sure."

They smiled at the conceit, but they both started when they heard the doors of a hansom slammed open in front of the house, followed by a vigorous pull at the bell.

"Now, who on earth can be calling at this time of the day?" cried Irene, for it was past six o'clock.

Ethel did not answer. She had suddenly become greatly agitated, for no assignable reason. Unable to control her emotion she walked to the door of the drawing-room in order to escape from the commonplaces of some casual acquaintance who might be putting in an appearance. When she opened the door she was confronted by a footman and an officer in the undress uniform of the Royal Navy.

In an instant the latter personage sprang forward and caught her in his arms, whilst the footman discreetly closed the door, and thus explained the case to Buttons in the hall: "'E said as 'is nyme was Commander Rodney, but 'e didn't give me chawnce to say a word. They seemed to know 'im all right hupstairs, all the syme."

Rodney did not at first perceive that Irene was in the room. Her eyes had filled with tears at the knowledge that her friend's happiness was now complete, for this was the first meeting of the lovers since that memorable night at the Paris Embassy when Frank had been compelled to forego his waltz, and could not even wait to say "Good-bye."

She discreetly gazed at the window, trying to find that thrice blessed spider again, and she only turned in response to Rodney's cordial greeting.

"I have been sent home overland with dispatches," he explained. "I was obliged to go straight to the Admiralty and War Office, and came on here at the earliest moment without even waiting to change my clothes. But surely you knew I was coming?" he continued, turning to Ethel.

"Not until I opened the door, and you—how could you be so ridiculous before the footman?" and she blushed so prettily that Frank nearly became ridiculous again.

"But I wired to you from Vienna, thirty hours ago."

"I never got it."

They were speculating upon the probable cause of the mysterious loss of the telegram when a knock at the door elicited a "Come in" from Irene.

The door opened gently, there was a discreet cough, and the footman entered, his action causing the three occupants of the room to laugh heartily. He was far too well

trained a servant to even smile. He solemnly approached Irene and said:

"There's a telegram, milady, which nobody knows 'oo it's for, and will you please to open it, milady."

The buff envelope was addressed to "Ethel, Grosvenor Square, London," and the same address appeared in type-written characters within. It was undoubtedly Rodney's message, for which the Post-office officials could find no lucid explanation until an unusually smart postman remembered that there was a Miss Ethel Harington staying at Lord Vyne's residence in the square.

Frank vowed that he wrote the full name and number of the house, but no one believed him, and, if anything, his sweetheart thought more of the error than of its possible explanation. His thoughts must surely have been very full of her if he believed that the Austrian telegraph operator at Vienna would be sufficiently enlightened by this vague description.

When the precious telegram had been safely stowed away in Ethel's purse, Frank said: "By-the-way, where is your brother?"

"He's in Paris, and Irene hasn't had a letter from him for two days."

"Well, this is the second day," grudgingly admitted Irene, "and I won't find him guilty until after to-night's post."

They were so busily engaged in talking that none of them heard the advent of another new arrival, nor, in the growing dusk did they notice the door open.

This time the footman was prepared for eventualities.

The moment he turned the handle he exclaimed quite pompously, "Major Harington." Irene's chair fell over, so quickly did she spring from it, and the footman was able to impart delicious confidences to Buttons for a second time: "They're 'avin' a fair beano hupstairs, I can tell *you*," he concluded with grinning emphasis.

Lady Vyne, good soul, had been indulging in a quiet nap before dinner, and her astonishment was great when she reached the drawing-room, whilst his lordship soon returned to dinner from his club and heartily welcomed the wanderers, especially Rodney, whose long absence rendered his unexpected return all the more delightful.

Harington had been offered a short leave by Lord Roberts, and, of course, eagerly availed himself of the favour. But in a little while, he explained, all the British troops now quartered in France would be quietly sent home. Indeed he hoped to be permanently back in town within a month.

Why he and Irene should look at each other when he said this, and why everybody else should laugh when they both blushed at being caught, no one troubled to explain.

He asked Ethel to marry him.

But the incident set Rodney thinking, and the result of his cogitations became apparent a little later when, in a quiet corner of the drawing-room he asked Ethel to marry him in November.

'I can't possibly be ready," she protested.

"Not even if there's an opportunity for a double wedding?" he said.

"I am quite sure Irene won't be married until early next year," she whispered, "but—but—if she agrees for November I will agree too."

Now, as both girls had debated the question many times from every possible point of view, and had already determined that a double wedding in November was absolutely within the bounds of even the dressmaker's limited imagination, it will be seen that there was not much need for the many and convincingly ingenious arguments used by their suitors before the date was finally fixed.

But such are the ways of women, and they are pleasant ways withal.

So it came to pass that after a brilliant ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square, which was attended among many other representatives of rank and fashion, by the Duke of Sussex, and the Earl of Tramore—few will recognise Lord Wolseley and Lord Roberts by these titles—Major and

They drove back to Grosvenor Square.

Lady Irene Harington and Commander and Mrs. Rodney drove back to the well-remembered house in Grosvenor Square to attend a very lively, not to say uproarious, wedding-breakfast.

By a little kindly arrangement made by the authorities it was not until the meal was well advanced that letters were handed to the two ladies announcing that her Majesty had been pleased to bestow upon them the insignia of the order of the Royal Red Cross for their services with the field hospital in France, and at the same time the War Office and Admiralty announced to Harington and Rodney that they were respectively gazetted Colonel and Post Captain.

They set forth on their wedding tours almost at the same moment; Irene and her husband to pass a quiet honeymoon in Yorkshire, whilst Ethel and Frank started for Paris and Egypt, as Mrs. Rodney would not be content until she had seen with her own eyes the exact locality where her sailor lover had blown up the Suez Canal.

By a singular coincidence they joined the *Peninsular* at Brindisi, and it was from the deck of that fine steamer whilst passing through the canal that Rodney pointed out to his wife the spot where he had succeeded in inflicting upon the allied nations the most damaging blow struck at them during the opening period of the war.

* * * * *

In the bar parlour of the "Cat and Anchor" at Catford a goodly company of cyclists assemble nightly to discuss old stories and new tyres. The conversation ranges from reminiscences of the great fights in the Seine Valley to the latest record established by the club. But never a race along the Ripley Road can compare in interest with that spin taken by the Catford Cyclist Corps from Vernon to Beuil.

The perpetual president of the club is Major William Briggs, who retired from the Army with Her Majesty's

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permission to retain his rank and uniform. He plays his magnificent part with unassuming dignity. The one story he never tells, but which is often told of him for the edification of admiring juniors, is the record of his adventure with the Zouaves, and how he preferred to look into the Valley of the Shadow rather than save his life by treachery.

A goodly company of cyclists assembled.

The gallant Major is vastly improved in manner and appearance. He bears upon him the stamp of a man who has deserved well of his country by responsible and noble deeds, and it is rumoured that his business as a cycle manufacturer has become extremely profitable since his return home.

* * * *

At Worthing, Colonel Perkins was unanimously chosen as Mayor for the succeeding year. Now that the alarms of war were over his good wife resolved that the new-born greatness of her husband would not permit of his personal attendance to the small details of a drapery establishment. It was obvious that the British Leonidas, the man who struck the first and most determined blow at the enemies of England, could not be expected to measure yards of calico or receive mysterious confidences as to the material for linings. So the shop, which throve amazingly, was handed over to an experienced manager, and Colonel and Mrs. Perkins with the children removed to a larger house in the fashionable West.

* * * * *

It was difficult to know how to recompense adequately the services which Mr. Thompson had rendered to the nation by the invention of his marvellous electric rifle.

There could not be the slightest doubt that by its aid alone Paris had been captured, and the capture of Paris meant the immediate cessation of the war, which must otherwise have dragged on its weary length for weeks, if not for months. What this meant, from the mere financial aspect, will be realised when it is remembered that the joint expenditure of Great Britain and the United States upon the maintenance of troops and ships in active service was estimated at £2,500,000 sterling daily.

When approached on the subject, Mr. Thompson himself emphatically repudiated any idea of receiving more than a modest reward for his work and he named an amount which whilst ridiculously small, would in his opinion suffice for the needs of himself and his family.

The matter however came before Parliament and a proposal was made that as it was understood to be her Majesty's intention to confer a baronetcy upon the famous inventor, the nation must give him the means of maintaining his new position with dignity and ease. It was consequently resolved that as the expense of manufacturing the apparatus and preparing the rifles had already been born departmentally, Sir Henry Thompson should receive a bonus of £2 for each weapon supplied to the troops engaged in the attack upon the French capital.

In other words he received £200,000, which was exactly twenty times as much as he had asked for.

* * * * *

Peyton and de Vismes, the heroes of the ride through the pass, both received promotion and the Victoria Cross. For his subsequent services in organising the successful attack upon the Central Asian Railway, Colonel W. J. Peyton was gazetted a K.C.S.I. The native comrades of the two British Officers were also rewarded by the Government of India with a generosity that evoked the liveliest approval in every cavalry bazaar from Peshawar to Tuticorin.

* * * *

When Colonel Ritchie and his charming wife arrived in New York, *en route* from London to San Francisco, they were met by two tug-boats full of interviewers, and were compelled to hold a series of brilliant receptions in the Waldorf Hotel to afford their numerous friends and innumerable admirers an opportunity of congratulating the famous leader of cavalry upon the many splendid achievements which his audacious originality had rendered possible to the troops of the United States.

The chief railway companies running to the west competed for the honour of supplying a special train to convey Colonel and Mrs. Ritchie and their friends to the Golden Gate, but in each case the invitation contained a polite hint that the journey would not be performed within sixty hours. Those fourteen ruined engines still loomed large in the memory of American railway men.

In San Francisco, of course, the party came in for a State ovation, and the last news to hand of the gallant Colonel is that he has been cordially commanded to fill an honoured place on board the *Hohenzollern* when that distinguished yacht next bears her Imperial master to Cowes.

* * * * *

And thus the curtain drops upon the chief actors of this drama of to-morrow, whilst the stage is cleared for the superb spectacle of a world free from bloodshed and rapine and famine.

CHAPTER LVI.

The Destiny of the Race.

So Peace ruled: not that sullen silence which harbours in its breast poisonous passions, but a peace such as the world had never known, deep, eternal and serene.

In this last mad eruption the evil genius of war had exhausted itself and humanity had cast it forth as a noisesome thing to be tolerated no more. The Saxon race for a moment held the world in fee. But it was only to give to the nations abiding rest, to sooth ambition, to repair injustice, to mete out to all freedom before the law of justice.

Such a vision of a new world and of a new age had Tennyson. Was this the consummation of the poet's dream? Had mankind progressed—

> Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World?

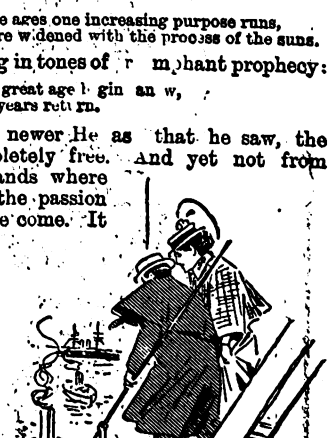
There was no room for scepticism in that noble mind. For in the same breath he wrote:

> Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

Did not Shelley also sing in tones of triumphant prophecy:

> The world's great age begin anew,
> The golden years return.

This surely was the "newer Hellas" that he saw, the Hellas of a world completely free. And yet not from countries of romance, lands where warm blood keeps fresh the passion of poetry, did the miracle come. It was from the race dedicated to commerce; the sturdy, unimaginative, practical people whose home, first set in the little Island of Great Britain, spread forth to a new continent in the West, and then broadened out till it covered the earth and sea.



Colonel Ritchie and his wife arrive at New York.

Such is the destiny of race. Three empires has the world known. Transient tyrannies have swept across it, and in the dark background of time there loom gigantic shadows of strange dynasties covering the earth with their power. Of them history has no word to

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say. But since man's life became clear and intelligible there have been but three preponderating races, each representing a cosmic force and taking its place in the due development of the destiny of humanity.

First came the Greek, the strong, sensuous being who gave order to chaos, who wrested from its bondage the perfect life of man. His was the rule of Art, that great force which gives each thing its place and finds for each a use, which cuts off the civilised from the barbarous, which carves the rich doorway to the Temple of the Ideal. Greece gave to mankind its implements—its faith, its yearnings, its strength; and in doing so exhausted herself.

There was the Roman, the man of action, not the dreamer of Hellas, not wrapped in the sensuous charms of art, but the strenuous builder of empire. It was the destiny of Rome to found the great doctrines of jurisdiction, to give law to the nations. Hers was a civil, not an æsthetic strength. As her great poet has in noble verses propounded;

Others, I know it well,
The breathing bronze will chase,
And from the death-white marble
Upcall the living face,
Will plead with eloquence not thine,
Will mete and map the skies,
And with the voice of science tell
When stars will set and rise.
'Tis thine, O Rome, to rule:
This mission ne'er forego,—
To spare in war the vanquished
And bring the haughty low.

She ruled by virtue of impartial Law, by the just principle which brought all peoples willingly to her feet. And yet even Law was not enough to bring a lasting empire. Others arose who also knew her Law, and from her nerveless grasp snatched the sceptre of her dominion. And in a day the Empire of Rome melted away before the vigorous Northmen.

Now has taken up the tale the third overwhelming dynasty that the world has known. The new empire is that of the Saxon race. Art and Law had had their day; there followed the dominance of science.

The nations had learnt the lessons of beauty, and knew how to disfigure them; had caught the message of Law, and knew how to abuse it. But nature has her revenges, and as the earth opened out before the pioneer, and discovery narrowed the great continent of Europe, and brought its peoples into active rivalry, it became clear that the new empire was not one of orb and sceptre—not the annexation of countries, and the absorption of alien races. It was to be an empire of another, a subtler, a more enduring, a more resistless kind.

For the message which science gave the world was that that race alone would conquer in the struggle for existence which showed greatest adaptability, which could easiest accommodate itself to the countless variations of earth's wayward moods. It was the cruel law of the survival of the fittest. There was need of some versatile people who feared no change of climate or contradiction of condition, for whom heat and cold, desert and fertile land, sea and plain, peace and war, luxury and indigence, struggle and ease were alike—whose temperament had infinite degrees passing from sanguine heat to phlegmatic torpor. For such a race the earth lay open, offering its dominion.

Here lay the tragedy of less fortunate peoples—more blessed, perhaps, in rich qualities of heart—more developed, it might be, in gentle graces and warm emotions—but forced, after all, to pay the penalty of their very virtues.

Life is eternal action and re-action, and from the being who rejoices in a nervous temperament which leads him to the pleasant paths of art, she sucks the virile vigour which should nourish and sustain. It is the fate of the Celt. He exhausts himself in the passion of life and scatters his years from him in each gust of self-abandonment. He is the invalid amongst men, the sick person, incapable of

A Solace and a Stay.

Ladies shopping or visiting; business men whose affairs compel the postponement of meals; all, in fact, whose avocations or recreations necessitate a protracted fast, or an undue amount of mental or physical fatigue, find a solace and a stay in a cup of Bovril, which can be prepared in a moment, and can be had almost anywhere. Taken at night before retiring, Bovril proves a "night-cap" par excellence, soothing the jaded brain and nerves and promoting refreshing sleep.

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A brilliant ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square.

continued effort, needing all that luxury can give and yielding himself to dreams and visions and things impalpable.

Nor is the more vigorous people of romance, that northern people, fitted for the struggle. For romance plays too great a part in its life. Its character is weakened by sensuousness, and its vision dulled by speculation. It may be led to victory, it cannot take itself to the goal. For in this new empire it needs that each and every man shall himself be leader. It must be a nation of pioneers.

This, then, is the mission of the Saxon race—slowly but surely to pour itself over the earth, to absorb the nations, to bring to pass that wonderful dream of a world united in a single family and speaking a common speech.

How rich the blood, how noble the inheritance of Britain! She has the stern indomitable defiance of the Saxon, the strenuousness of the Celt, the romantic genius of the Teuton. She is both actor and dreamer. Her poets have dwelt beside the founders of her empire. Reckless of danger, amorous of what is new, versatile in action, ready in resource, fertile beyond the ingenuity of chance, adaptable to all changes of climate and modes of life, at home in ice-bound regions and beneath the equatorial sun, carrying with her the capacity of empire, the power to rule, and obstinate in the attainment of her desire, she is bound by no limit of race, no dimension of geography.

And thus she early found her power. She has led the world in all its noblest struggles. Whilst other nations groaned in kingly servitude, she was already free. Her battle of liberty was fought before the hope of freedom dawned in Europe. Her conscience refused that allegiance to sacerdotalism, which drenched the Continent with blood, and her reformation long premeditated, came, if not without the agony of struggle, still gently and without excess. Her Parliament at almost the dawn of her history gave equal laws, disputed with kings, and drove out tyrants. Her press was free, her speech unrestrained. And as she batled ever for freedom, so she gave herself to the passionate pursuit of knowledge, to the mysteries of philosophy, to the sublime teaching of science. Thus, armed with all that discovery could yield her and owing allegiance only to herself, she poured her sons over the earth and upon the seas, and in remote regions founded another empire. America arose — that second England — new home of the Saxon race, and heir to her aspirations and her destiny—America which developed a new type of being, more versatile still, and still more strenuous.

Commerce bent itself to Britain and all peoples entrusted to her their possessions. The Saxon tongue has become the speech of the world, the Saxon ensign—whether British or American—is the flag of the seas.

Thus, as life becomes more complex and harder grows the struggle, there is no escape for peoples not fitted to bear its strain, and the Saxon race will absorb all and embrace all, reanimating old civilisations and giving new vigour to exhausted nations. England and America—their destiny is to order and rule the world, to give it peace and freedom, to bestow upon it prosperity and happiness, to fulfil the responsibilities of an all-devouring people.

This vision—far-off may-be—already dawns: and in the glory of its celestial light is the peace of nations.

The End.

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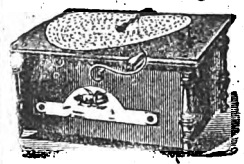

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

S. T.—Yes; the Thames and the Severn are connected by a canal thirty-seven miles long, but its existence is known to very few people for the reason that as railways extended, the canal was allowed to fall into disuse and become unnavigable. It leaves the Thames at Lechlade, and at one part it has a tunnel three miles long under a hill. It has recently been rendered fit for navigation at a cost of £20,000.

C. G.—The Chinese, properly trained and fed, make formidable opponents in athletics and war. Some of the Chinese at our new possession, Wei-hai-wei, have been practising foot-ball under British guidance, and they have succeeded so well that a team is to visit this country for next season. What can be done with the Chinese as soldiers may be seen from Gordon's exploits in the Flowery Land.

J. M.—You will need to be very healthy and have a strong constitution, for life in the Niger Coast Protectorate. According to the report for last year, the European population was 200, each of whom was treated by the doctors, on the average, six times in the twelve months. Fifteen died and fifty-eight were invalided. High wages are enticing, but they are not everything.

Martel.—It has recently been discovered by a British scientist that fresh water falling through air electrifies it negatively, while salt water under similar conditions electrifies it positively.

S. T. R.—The South American Republics are all afraid that the United States will swallow them up; they accuse the U.S. of bad faith in connection with Mexico, and say that the Great Republic will hesitate at nothing to find a pretext for annexing their territory. Your idea that these countries would be strong enough to prevent annexation if they combined is doubtful; but they would not combine. They do not like each other, and there is a preponderance of Indian and mixed races among their populations that bodes ill for combination. In Ecuador, for instance, there are 100,000 whites out of a population of 1,270,000. The army numbers 3,300, and the navy consists of a torpedo-launch and a transport.

C.—Cremation does not seem to prosper in Scotland. Since the crematorium was opened in Glasgow four years ago, only forty bodies have been burned. This may be due to the charges, but there is always great difficulty in getting people to depart from established custom.

D. R.—The greatest depth to which a diver has descended into the sea is 204ft. At that depth the pressure is 83lb. to the square inch.

T. R. E.—The monkey temple of Benares is one of the grandest and most costly buildings in the city. The followers of Brahma hold this animal in great awe; it is sacred, and they fear and worship it as devoutly as any of the images of wood and stone. The temple is elaborately fitted up for the accommodation of numerous monkeys who are confined in it.

B.—The power of gelatine when contracting is shown by what happens in collotype plates. If one of these be over-dried, the gelatine in contracting tears away the surface of the glass. The glass being "ground" gives the gelatine a hold. The glass tears in fern-like patterns generally, but different kinds of gelatine produce different patterns.

V. I.—There is a real "Strad." violin in the Hungarian National Museum that was presented to that institution on one condition—that it should always be lent, for special purposes, to the best native player. It was made for Leopold II., Duke of Tuscany.

G. L.—There are many species of flies that never indulge in sleep.

H. O.—Hospitals are numerous in all the Australian Colonies, especially in New South Wales. Although the Colony has long since been settled its resources are still largely undeveloped and numbers of men are at work in districts far removed from home; hospitals are therefore a necessity, and are to be found in all large provincial towns. There are one hundred and eight in New South Wales, all of which, except three, are subsidised by the Government.

F. D., having read that the King of Sweden is the descendant of Bernadotte, one of Napoleon's soldiers, asks if that Royal house can claim to have a humbler origin than any other in Europe?——————No, the King of Servia holds the record in this respect. He is the great-grandson of Yephrem, the brother of the heroic Milosh Obrenovitch, the leader in the struggle for Servian independence. Milosh was a herdsman and Yephrem was a keeper of pigs.

K. G.—The oldest commercial company now in existence is the New River Company, founded under a charter in 1619; its shares now fetch enormous prices. The oldest company concerned with commerce in its strict sense is the Hudson Bay Company, founded under a charter granted in 1670 by Charles II. to Prince Rupert and others. The original scope of the company was much modified in 1868, when it surrendered most of its right to the Crown for a money indemnity.

Y. wishes to know why the House of Lords is sometimes called the "House of Landlords."——————Because almost all of them are large landowners. Fully one-third of the land in Great Britain is in the possession of members of the gilded chamber.

J. H.—Nearly a million quail are sent from Egypt to France every year.

L. A.—The laughing plant grows in Arabia. It has bright flowers and soft, velvety seed pods. Each pod contains two or three seeds, resembling black beans, which the natives dry and crush. On taking a dose of this powder the soberest person begins to dance, laugh, and shout, and continues till he is exhausted; he then falls asleep, and on waking up, he has no recollection of what has taken place since he took the powder.

C. N.—British Guiana is the colony that contains the greater number of nationalities. Among the labourers may be seen—in addition to the aboriginal Indians—negroes from Africa, creoles from the West Indian Islands, Arabs from Algeria, Spaniards, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Afghans, Chinese, Danish, and natives of all parts of India, with occasionally a gang of British seamen. The planters for the most part are British, but there are representatives of many European countries also.

D. E.—Among the Romans and Athenians it was a very serious offence to get into debt. So strict was their law in this respect that a debtor was often sold into slavery in order to raise money to pay his creditors.

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Make up the best sentence you can out of eight words, commencing with A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, in proper order. Thus: "**A** Beautiful **C**ycle **D**oes **E**xcellently **F**or **G**ood **H**oliday." The letters **A B** will be counted as words used if to denote our cycles. Enclose loose stamp for result.

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We ask you to buy nothing, to subscribe nothing, before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office gets the benefit of.

First Prize, £23 A.B. Safety, fitted with A.B. tyres.

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Second Class (9 prizes) £23 Cycle for £9
Third Class (12 prizes) £23 Cycle for £10
Fourth Class (15 prizes) £23 Cycle for £11
Fifth Class (18 prizes) £23 Cycle for £12
Sixth Class (20 prizes) £23 Cycle for £13
Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14

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Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Enclose loose stamp for postage of Result of Competition. As so few are able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for one of our Consolation Prizes **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any Prize liable to forfeiture.

£100 We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to any ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. We are continually refusing £14 and £14 10s., both by cheque, through post, and cash in our showrooms, for the self-same cycles. We absolutely could not afford to sell to anyone below £15.

Mark letters "SHORT STORIES" on top corner of envelope, and address to the Managing Director,

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59 & 60 CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Hopkins Street, London, W.

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CAUTION.

Notice.—"DOLLY" Blue is neatly tied in a white bag to a small handle to hold by whilst using. Sold only in Plain White Calico Bags. No blue (whether in bags or not), except that of Messrs. Wm. Edge & Sons Ltd., can be Sold as "Dolly" Blue. "Dolly" Blue is sold by all Grocers and Oilmen at 1d. per bag.

"DOLLY" CREAM AND TINTS.

"DOLLY" Cream Colour, for tinting Curtains, Muslins, Laces, Silks, Blouses, etc., a rich Cream Shade.

"DOLLY" Tints manufactured in six Shades—Pink, Terra-Cotta, Old Gold, Heliotrope, Sea Green, and Canary Yellow—for tinting Faded Ribbons, Lace, etc. Sold everywhere, 1d. per bag. Will wash out when required.

"DOLLY" FAST DYES.

The "DOLLY" Dyes are fast on Wool and Cotton alike, and will not wash out or fade. "Dolly" Dyes are not Tints, but are Solid Colours, viz., Black, Brown, Blue, Green, Red, and Marone, Price 3d. each Dye. "Dolly" Dyes for Home Dyeing are sold by all Grocers and Oilmen.

IMPORTANT.

The Public are cautioned against attempts which may be made to supply other Blue, Tints and Dyes than those of Messrs. Wm. Edge and Sons Ltd., when "Dolly" Blue, "Dolly" Tints, and "Dolly" Dyes are ordered.

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COCOA

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LYLE'S GOLDEN SYRUP.

LONGEST ESTABLISHED PUREST & BEST.

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH.

"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.
"SIMPLE TE T."
Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.

FREE FROM ACID - POISON OR GRIT

LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD

PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS, LIVERPOOL.

RED WHITE AND BLUE FRENCH COFFEE

SOLD EVERYWHERE

DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST OR AFTER DINNER.

IT IS NOT

Reckitt's PARIS BLUE

UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.

EIGHTH YEAR OF THE FRESH AIR FUND.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 531. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 4TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

A Public Boon:

It is to the critical and discerning ability of the public that Guy's Tonic owes its present proud position. The remedy has been weighed in the balance and found to possess exceptional merit, and to give exceptional value. That is why the number of fluid ounces of Guy's Tonic sold in the shops to-day is five times as great as it was ten months ago. Nothing but strong public approval could account for this marked access of trade.

As a Remedy for Digestive Disturbance, depressing pains and oppression after eating, and for preventing food becoming like a weight at the pit of the Stomach, Guy's Tonic is invaluable. People who take it after meals digest their food thoroughly and completely, so that the Body is far better nourished in every way, and there is an entire absence of those unpleasant Symptoms which make food and eating a bugbear to so many.

Congratulations:

E. P. LUBBOCK, Esq., of 8 Carlisle Terrace, Gravesend, writes:

"I am pleased to learn "of the reduction in the "price of Guy's Tonic. I "hold a very high opinion "of your medicine."

Mrs. M. A. JACKSON writes from 3 Castle Villas, Lenton Boulevard, Nottingham:

"I am pleased to see the "price of Guy's Tonic is "reduced. I have found "great benefit from it for "Liver trouble and In- "digestion."

A new size (Six Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

"ALFOSCO" R.&Co.

Allen Foster & Co

SOLE MAKERS OF

THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

"ALFOSCO" R.&Co.

Buy Direct by Parcels Post from the Leading Firm of London Manufacturers.

Design No. 105. **10/6**

A Special Line in Ladies' Serge Costume Skirts, Black and Navy, lined throughout, cut full. Price only 3/11 each; postage, 5d.

Design No. 110. **10/6**

Design No. 105. 10/6.

Made in the world-renowned Spécialité Serge, or in the excellent Venetian Cloth, all colours: Black, Navy, Brown, Fawn, Grey, Blue-Grey, Electric, Myrtle, Reseda, Purple, &c. The bodice is shaped to the figure and very prettily designed. It has a pleated front, and trimmed with a frill of cloth carried over the shoulders, and large fancy buttons. The bodice and sleeves are lined. The Skirt is cut full and fashionably. Costume complete, **10/6**. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. Skirt alone, **5/6**. Carriage paid 5d. extra.

Patterns & Sketches Post Free.

Design No. 110, 10/6,

Is Allen Foster and Co.'s famous Reefer Costume. Thousands of Testimonials speak in most flattering terms of this Coat and Skirt Costume. The Coat is cut in the latest approved style. It has a velvet collar and small fancy buttons. The skirt is cut full and fashionably. Made in the smooth-faced Venetian Cloth or Spécialité Serge. Price **10/6** complete, in either cloth. Carriage, 6d. extra. Colours: Black, Navy, Grey, Fawn, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze-Green, Purple, Electric, &c.

Patterns & Sketches Post Free.

Regular Stock Sizes are 34, 36, and 38 in. round bust (under arms), the Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. in front. Larger or Special Sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra.

Patterns and New Illustrated Sketch Book of Fashions for the Spring Season POST FREE on application.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

The London Manufacturers,

17 ROSCOE STREET, GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

MASON'S ESSENCE OF COFFEE AND CHICORY

EXPELS THE OLD METHOD

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES AND MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3; three assorted 1/8.

Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

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A Weekly Magazine of Sport and Adventure.

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CURES

NEURALGIA

Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

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Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 Hatton Garden, E.C.

£4 15/- Few Lady's and Gents' shop soiled, last Season's Pneumatics from best English makers. With 12 months' guarantee.

Easy payments arranged. Lists free.

F. G. Potter, Wholesale Cycle Factor, Norwich.

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A WONDERFUL OFFER.

Gratis and Post Free upon receipt of Fourpence to cover cost of packing, postage, etc., the following to every applicant:

100 Assorted Foreign Stamps. 25 British Colonials. 1 Album. Packet of Unused Stamps. Packet of Mounts. Packet American Stamps. Packet South African Stamps. Packet Japanese Stamps.

Price List Free. Approval Sheets. Good Discount.

Universal Stationery Company, TENBY Pembrokeshire.

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THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily Reduce Weight and Cure Corpulency Permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. Reduction begins immediately.

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

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Mrs. Weaver, of Greenpits Villa, Station Road, Ross, Hereford, says: "Am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st."

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Lady Constance Conrad writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with the Tablets."

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Mr. Butler, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone."

Send 2/6 to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See Illd. Guide (259 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000 Tobacconists Outfitting Co., 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

(Really Genuine.) In Patent Air-tight Tins, ½lb., 10d.; 1lb., 1/4; 1lb., 2/4; including Tin and Postage.

MRS. CONYERS, MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, or Varicose Veins, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free.

S. S. MURRAY,
7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

JUNO CYCLES

LISTS POST FREE

ARE THE VERY BEST AND MOST UP-TO-DATE.

Carriage Paid. Cash Discount.

Write for New Season's List.

JUNO Cycles and Accessories sent Post Free.

Road Racer, £10; 16s. 8d. Monthly.

Monthly		Monthly		Monthly
£10 ... 16/8	£12 ... 20/-	£14 14s. ... 24/6
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METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO. Ltd.,

Juno Cycle School, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

Typewriters, £9 9s. 15s. 9d. Monthly.

You will be pleased with CHANCELLOR SOAPS.

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Every Competitor gets one.

GET A BAR TO-DAY!

Won't You?

Send 4d. for Sample Bar

GIVEN AWAY

HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A £300 HOUSE

LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.

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INVESTED FUNDS £10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

12,000 Stitches a Minute.

A LADY writes of the NEW AUTOMATIC KNITTER:

"I earn my living entirely by the machine."

A FATHER *writes: "My little girl, nine years of age, earns as much as Five Shillings some days."*

Knits Socks (a pair in 35 minutes) and Stockings, Underclothing, Fancy Goods, &c. Easily learned. Lessons free. Cash, Hire, and Work Terms from Sorres. Dept., 67 Southwark Street, London, S.E., or 58 Union Street, Glasgow.

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Short Stories

LOVE WAR ADVENTURE ROMANCE PATHOS HUMOUR

No. 531.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending March 4th, 1899.

A CARLIST MISSION.

"It is useless to attempt to persuade me further, dear Mercedes. Not even for your sweet sake can I consent to give up this mission, dangerous as I know it must be. The very danger is an inducement; the greater the danger, the more proud shall I be that I have been entrusted with the mission. I long now to do something for him who is the rightful King of Spain."

"You have served Alfonso in Cuba; why should you now fight against him in Spain?"

"I served Spain in Cuba, not this King Alfonso. Don Carlos is the rightful King of Spain, and although his fortunes are low, and his case now almost hopeless, I will not hesitate to do what I can or him. As soon as I could leave Cuba after the proclamation of Alfonso, I did so. Then this wretched fever overtook me. Now that I am well again I must act."

Pedro Alzola drew himself up and looked proudly at the girl in front of him. He had raised his voice as he had spoken the last words, and Mercedes stepped forward and laid her hand warningly upon his arm.

"Speak not so loudly, Pedro," she said hastily. "You know that in this house all are adherents of Alfonso. When do you start on your mission? Oh, that I could dissuade you from your purpose!"

Her eyes were fixed appealingly upon his, and for just a second the young man's resolution seemed to waver; but the weakness was quickly over, and he spoke again.

"Let us not talk further on my errand. I start this afternoon. Was it only for this that you urged me to come here this morning?"

"I wished to save you if I could, Pedro," replied Mercedes, clasping her hands. There was a pause for a few seconds and then she continued:

"You start this afternoon; will you tell me your destination, and how you intend to reach it, so that I may know where you are as the hours go by, and pray for your safety?"

"That is a secret which I ought to tell no one, least of all to one who is so connected with friends of Alfonso," he returned with a slight smile. "Nay, Mercedes," he added as he saw a slight flush pass over her beautiful face, "that was but a jest. I know right well that my secret will be safe in your keeping. I am going to Saragossa and I shall travel part of the way by train and walk or ride, according to circumstances, to the village of Vejos, where I shall put up for the night at the 'Black Bull' Inn. I shall be disguised as a peasant," he continued, growing enthusiastic again, "and after I leave the inn to-morrow morning—if I cannot get one before that—I have the name of a trusty man who will give me a mule to enable me to finish my journey. But it all depends upon what happens," he concluded hastily, as though sorry that he had said so much.

"Heaven grant that you may escape all dangers!" exclaimed Mercedes, "but this, I fear will be our last meeting. My father will never consent to my marriage with one who has espoused the cause of the Pretender; so that, even though you come safely through the conflict, which, alas! may not be, we shall be parted for ever. But, tell me, have you the letter upon you now?"

She spoke in a low tone, and bent forward somewhat eagerly.

"Yes," he answered after a moment's hesitation. "I have it here. It was entrusted to me only this morning, and I shall not let it pass from my keeping until I deliver it to the person for whom it is intended."

"I should like to look at it," said Mercedes, with a pleading glance. "To me, it is like a dread document that means unhappiness for us both—I had almost said, our death warrant, Pedro."

"Dear Mercedes, do not regard it in so gloomy a light," said Pedro, tenderly. "I am a soldier and a son of a soldier, and you also are of a soldier's family. I am doing nothing more than a soldier would do. I thought you were more brave; something has unnerved you."

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"Yes, Pedro. But I will not distress you further with my gloomy thoughts. Still, I would like to look at the cover of that packet—to just hold the message that means so much for you and me. I cannot tell you why this is; a woman's whim or curiosity, call it what you like, but it has a strange fascination for me and I ask you to grant this last request."

Pedro was moved by the tenderness in her voice, mingled as it was with something that seemed to express hopelessness and loss. Glancing cautiously about him, Pedro unbuttoned his coat and from an inner pocket slowly drew forth a square packet wrapped in silk. For a moment he held it and then handed it to her.

"And this is the missive that carries so much with it!" said Mercedes pensively, gazing at the thin packet which she held.

She looked at it thoughtfully for several moments, until Pedro began to fear that her gloomy thoughts would overcome her and cause her to weep. He stretched out his hand as if to take it from her when she started back with an exclamation of fright.

"Hark!" she exclaimed. "Here comes my father. He must not see this or you are lost!" And she hastily hid the important packet in the bosom of her dress.

Alzola stepped forward as if to take it, but Mercedes had already darted to the door in her anxiety to prevent the entrance of the newcomer. She opened the door and stepped into the corridor. Pedro listened for voices, and from where he stood at the other end of the long room he heard confused tones. The next minute Mercedes returned with a light step to her lover.

"It was only a servant, after all," she said in answer to his inquiring look. "Oh, Pedro, take this dreadful document,"—drawing it forth and handing it to him—"and hide it away quickly. I began to fear that my curiosity would bring about your ruin. Hide it away quickly, I cannot bear to look at it again!"

She thrust it hurriedly into his hand, and half helped him to place it in his pocket. She was trembling so violently that when he had once more safely hidden the object of his mission he took her in his arms and tried by loving words and caresses to still her agitation.

"But I must now be going, Mercedes," said Pedro, when the girl's agitation had ceased, "I have stayed too long. I have still some preparation to make for my journey."

Mercedes did not attempt to detain him, and after a tender leave-taking, with many injunctions to be cautious on the part of Mercedes, the lovers separated.

It was about half-an-hour after the departure of Pedro that Mercedes Chabran rang the bell and told her maid that she wished to see Carlos.

This man was a young Irishman who had been brought to Spain when a mere boy, and had at this period been in the service of the Chabrans for ten years. In speech and appearance he was quite Spanish, although occasionally there was a twinkle in his eyes which is far more commonly seen in a native of Ireland than in a Spaniard. His real name was Charles Regan, which the Spaniards had turned into Carlos Regano.

"Carlos," said the young woman when the servant entered, "I understand that my father has given you leave of absence."

"Yes, Miss," returned Carlos.

"I want you, Carlos, to devote some part of that time to undertaking an errand for me. Can you do that?"

The Irishman looked somewhat puzzled.

"Will you tell what you want, miss?" he returned, avoiding a direct answer to her question.

"You know my relative, Pedro Alzola? I think you have seen him. I want you to carry a note to him. He is travelling to——"

She stopped abruptly, and looked fixedly at Carlos; then she continued in fairly good English, but with a decided accent:

"Charles, you have been a faithful servant, and I am sure I can trust you."

"You can that same, Miss," replied the Irishman emphatically dropping into a way of speaking which he had never shaken off, despite his many years residence in a foreign country. "It is a pleasure to do anything for ye, Miss Mercedes."

"Señor Alzola has been here this morning to say good-bye to me and I fear that I have depressed him with gloomy forbodings. I have written a letter to him which I wish you to convey, as it may serve to comfort him on his journey. I know that he will stay this night at the 'Black Bull' Inn, at Vejos. He will be disguised as a peasant. I wish you to give him this letter of consolation some time to-morrow morning after he has left the inn. You are discreet, and know how to hold your tongue. Can you do this for me?"

"I can, and I will!" returned the Irishman, in a tone that left no doubt that he would accomplish the task. "And I am pleased to have the chance of repaying you for the kindness you have shown me. An Irishman may be hot tempered, but his heart is in the right place, and he doesn't forget those who've been good to him. Give me the letter miss, and Mr. Pedro shall have it to-morrow morning if I am alive."

"Or he is," breathed Mercedes. "Charles, if you meet him before he reaches the inn to-night and—and—he is in trouble, will you help him?"

"Trust me for that, miss!" answered the Irishman in a decided tone. "Have you anything more to say?"

"No; I think you understand me," returned Mercedes with a meaning glance. The young Irishman returned the glance, bowed and withdrew.

When he reached the corridor he stood still for a moment and passed his hand through his hair, while a puzzled and yet amused expression passed over his countenance.

"This beats me," he muttered. "She couldn't know the reason why the old gentleman has given me a holiday. She has given me the very information I wanted, to help me to do what the old gentleman wants, and yet I know she expects me to help Mr. Alzola to do what her father doesn't want him to do. It's rather mixed up, but that's what it amounts to. So to please one I've got to take something away from Alzola and kill him if necessary, and to please the other I have got to watch over him and hand him a letter to comfort him when he is in the thick of his trouble.

"I can't see through it properly, but women are strange creatures. I don't know that I am particularly fond of Mr. Alzola; he wasn't very nice to me before he went to Cuba and I haven't forgotten it aither. The old gentleman has promised me a big sum if I do it, and the young lady hasn't promised me—. Get out wid ye! Ye ought to be ashamed of yoursilf, Charles! She's pretty, and an Irishman should be ready to go through fire and water for a pretty face!" And he went off to his own room.

It was getting dusk that evening when a peasant, mounted on a mule, and ambling along the road towards Vejos, suddenly pulled up. The cause of the sudden

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stop was a sound of hoofs rapidly approaching from the direction whence the peasant himself had come.

"He seems to be in haste," muttered the peasant, "and I prefer that he should pass me."

He got off the mule and pretended to be busy examining the mule's fore legs. A minute later he was joined by a man on horseback.

"Can you tell me if I am far from the 'Black Bull'?" inquired the new arrival, who was fairly well dressed and apparently of the well-to-do middle class; "why can't people leave off fighting, so that a man can travel by train instead of jolting over these rough roads? I expect that my horse will be lame by the time I reach the inn."

"You have about a mile farther to go," replied Alzola, imitating the rough talk of the peasants. "You have lost your way, or you would not be on this out-of-the-way path."

"One might lose anything here," returned the stranger, "as well as one's way. Are you going towards the inn? Yes? Then we'll go together, for I don't like these parts. It will do my horse good to take it easy, so your mount will be able to keep up with mine."

Alzola was rather disconcerted, but after a moment's reflection he decided to agree. It might be safer for him, after all. He therefore nodded assent, mounted his mule, and the two men continued the journey side by side.

There was very little conversation between them until they reached the inn. Alzola thought it prudent not to say much lest he betrayed his superior social standing; moreover, as his companion was above his own assumed rank, it was not becoming in him to carry on a conversation. The man on horseback, who said that his name was Lopez, addressed him occasionally and made various remarks on different subjects, but on the whole very little was said.

Arriving at the inn, Lopez insisted that the peasant should come into the best room with him. There was not much accomodation at the little place and the best room was but a poor affair. Alzola tried to decline the honour, but the other took him by the arm and drew him into the room.

"Hark," she exclaimed. "Here comes my father."

"The landlord will see that our animals are attended to," he said, "so just sit down there and make yourself comfortable. We'll have some wine and some supper, for I think you said you were going to stay the night?"

Alzola had said nothing of the kind, but he judged it prudent not to contradict. He was naturally suspicious of everybody, but there seemed no reason to fear that his new companion had any sinister designs against him. If he were suspected by the Royalists they would simply surround him and take his document from him by force; they would not trouble to set a man to ferret out his secret, or to get the document away from him by cunning. Still, he must be cautious.

The wine and some fruit were brought, and both men did justice to it. Alzola relaxed a little under the influence of the wine, while Lopez paid no heed to the apparent difference in the social scale. Before they had been seated half-an-hour Alzola had ceased his imitation of his peasant speech and the two men were chatting amicably together.

"That's a good ruse of yours," said Lopez, "to disguise yourself as a peasant. I wish I had done the same. A man's life isn't safe about here, I should say, if the people think that he's got a little money about him."

Alzola started, but Lopez only laughed.

"Oh, don't be afraid," he returned in answer to the quick glance which Pedro shot at him. "I'm in disguise too, for that matter. I think it is lucky that we have met, for I imagine that we are on much about the same errand. Well! well!" he added as the other pushed back his chair, "I don't wish to know your business, but there is no reason why we shouldn't spend the evening agreeably together. We need not be afraid of each other."

He filled the glasses again, disregarding the fact that Alzola had half risen from his seat.

"Here's good luck to both of us!" he said raising his glass.

Alzola, his suspicion allayed by the easy manner of Lopez, and anxious to repair so far as possible the blunder he had committed in betraying himself, sat down again, drew his chair closer to the table and knocked his glass against the other's.

"As you say, here's luck to both of us!" he said with

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Pedro Alzola . . . stooped and picked them up.

assumed heartiness. "If I choose to travel as a peasant why not?"

"Exactly!" replied Lopez. "And now, if you have finished, let us pass the time by throwing the dice. We need not play for money, but just for amusement. To show money here might be dangerous."

There was a box of dice on the shelf and the two began to play. After they had been thus engaged for about five minutes, Lopez, in making his throw, ejected the dice too roughly and the little cubes rolled over the table and fell to the floor by Alzola's side.

Lopez uttered an apology and rose for the purpose of finding the dice, but with true politeness Alzola bade him sit still and, shifting his chair, stooped and picked them up.

"Come, you're not drinking!" exclaimed Lopez after the next throw.

"I never drink much," returned Alzola as he rattled the dice in the box.

"Nonsense!" was the rejoinder. "This wine would not hurt a baby. It's fairly good for the place. Come, drink up your glass, man!"

Pedro sipped at the wine and made his throw.

"Two fives," said Lopez, yawning. "This is rather a slow game, and I am getting sleepy." He lay back in his chair and yawned again.

"I, too, feel tired," said Pedro, drowsily leaning back. "I think we had better retire."

"Stay a little longer, and smoke another cigarette," said Lopez. "These are good, try one,"—pushing the box of cigarettes across the table.

Alzola made no movement. He saw the box, but his eyes were heavy. He gazed sleepily at the box of cigarettes, then his eyes closed, and his head dropped on his breast.

When he awoke with a start his first action was to raise his hand to his breast, and a feeling of relief passed over him when his hand touched the place where the packet had been deposited. His companion was still sitting opposite him smoking his cigarette.

"I thought you wouldn't sleep long," remarked Lopez "so I stayed here to keep you company."

"Have I been asleep long?" asked Pedro, vaguely.

"Not really asleep, only dozing," replied Lopez. "The least thing would have aroused you, as that gust of wind did just now when it shook the window. We had better get to bed."

The landlord appeared in response to his call, and said that the two beds were ready. They were both in one room, as he had no other room to spare. This was perplexing to Alzola and he was about to protest that he was not fit company for Lopez—he intended to make other excuses when the landlord was gone—when all three were surprised by the door being flung back violently to admit an officer and half-a-dozen soldiers.

"Seize the peasant!" shouted the officer, and the six men made a rush at Alzola.

All was confusion. The landlord ran back, scared almost out of his wits, and Pedro, guessing that any attempt at concealment would be useless, endeavoured to gain the wall in order to prevent an attack from behind while he defended himself to the last. But, before he could carry out his purpose and grasp the revolver hidden under his coat, the soldiers were upon him, and, struggle as he might, he was unable to free himself. In the greatest of mental agony he had to submit to his clothes being torn open and the precious packet, with its silken covering dragged from its place of concealment and handed to the officer.

The officer tore off the covering and opened the packet. He stared at it for a brief space, then looked wonderingly from the document to Pedro.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked. "There's nothing in it, the paper is blank!"

If he expected Pedro to tell him all about it he was doubly mistaken. The young fellow was just as much surprised as the officer, but his surprise was not manifested, because his face was distorted with rage. On hearing the officer's words he just had sense enough left to keep silence and await developments.

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"We have seized the wrong man, after all!" exclaimed the officer in a tone of vexation. "Where's the other fellow? Seize him!"

But the "other fellow" was nowhere to be seen; he had apparently taken advantage of the confusion to effect his escape. The officer satisfied himself that Pedro had no incriminating document upon him, took away his revolver and told him that he might go where he liked—only that was not exactly what he said. They then all hurried out after the missing Lopez.

Nearly out of his mind with rage, mortification and perplexity, Pedro staggered about the room blindly in his attempts to find the door; but, stumbling over a chair that had been thrown down in the scuffle he fell to the ground, striking his head heavily against the hard floor. There he lay unconscious for more than an hour, when someone carried him off to a rude bed on the floor above.

The next morning Pedro awoke with a splitting headache and to the memory of the failure of his mission, and the mystery of the document entrusted to him. He was not long in arriving at the conclusion that Lopez had made an exchange while he had been asleep in his chair, but the reason was not clear.

What was to be done? It was useless to go forward, and equally so, he had no doubt, to set out in search of his companion of the previous evening. And how could he go back to Barcelona and confess that he had failed! He descended the rickety stairs and found his way to the stable; the mule was there, but the horse ridden by Lopez was gone.

The landlord met him and pressed him to have breakfast, but the young fellow declined and pulled out his purse to pay for his lodgings. The landlord, however, refused to accept anything, saying that his companion, who had left much earlier, had paid for all.

When Pedro found himself once more on the road it was with no proper idea as to where he was going. But the incidents of his journey were not yet over. He had not proceeded far from the inn, when he was hailed by a young man whom he saw striding across a field.

Pedro went on without heeding; he had had enough of casual acquaintances. But the man sprang lightly into the road and stopped the mule.

"I have something for you, Señor Alzola," he cried. "something that you will be pleased to receive." And with these words he handed to Pedro a somewhat bulky letter.

"How did you know my name?" asked Pedro, mechanically taking the letter.

"You do not recognise me," was the reply, "I am Carlos Regano and am in the service of Señor Chabran, and that letter was given to me for you by the señorita."

Alzola was almost beyond the capability of feeling surprise. He urged his mule forward a few paces and then tore open the letter. On a sheet of paper was written these words:

"Forgive me! I did this to save you. This will be delivered to you when all danger is, I hope, past. You now can fulfil your mission."

Pedro, scarcely able to believe his eyes, looked from the letter to the other enclosure, in which he recognised the missing packet. His brain was in a whirl; he could only return to Carlos and in broken tones ask him to convey his thanks to the señorita.

Then the two men separated, Carlos to return to Barcelona, and Pedro to continue his journey.

On the following day Carlos returned somewhat unexpectedly as the other servants thought. Señor Chabran was not in, so he reported first to Mercedes.

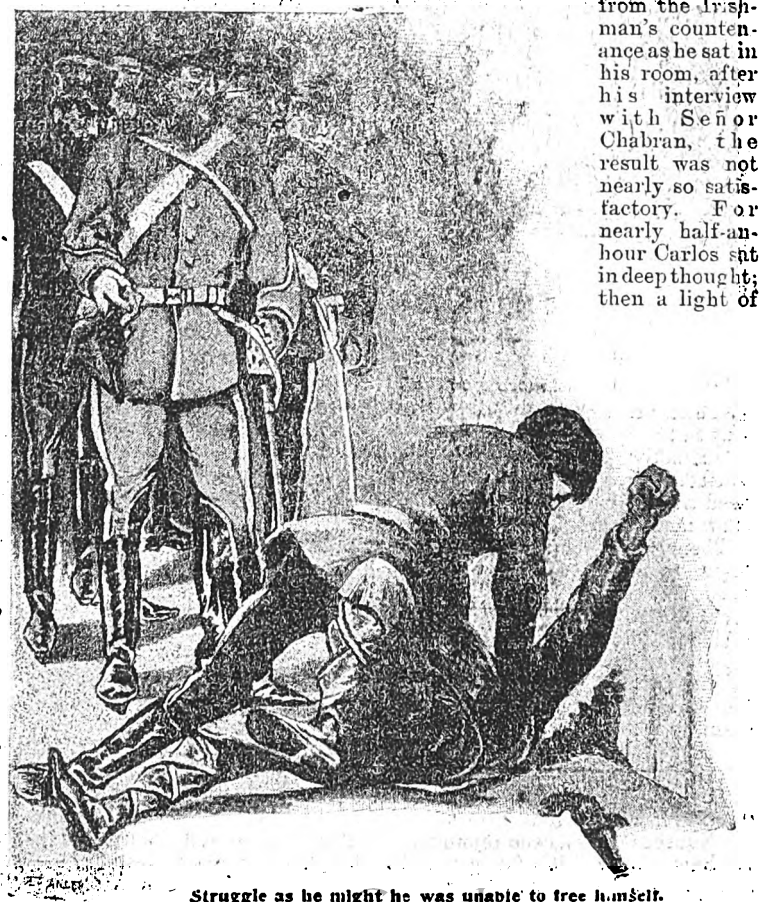
"And you delivered my letter of consolation to him quite safely?" she inquired anxiously. "And—was he in any trouble?"

"There was a little trouble at the inn, miss," replied the Irishman, "but he was really in no danger. I watched the scuffle from the door and would have helped him if necessary; but they only found on him some blank papers."

"What! that all?" asked Mercedes; and after thanking the Irishman and rewarding him in a way that made his eyes sparkle, she dismissed him.

"That's a good stroke of business," mused Carlos as he left the room. "And I expect the old gentleman will act just as handsomely when I hand him this packet."

But to judge from the Irishman's countenance as he sat in his room, after his interview with Señor Chabran, the result was not nearly so satisfactory. For nearly half-an-hour Carlos sat in deep thought; then a light of



Struggle as he might he was unable to free himself.

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Alzola tore open the letter.

intelligence took the place of the vacant stare in his eyes and he slapped his knee vigorously.

"I can see through it all!" he said softly, "and she's as clever as—well never mind who. I'll warrant this is how she did it!

"She heard that he was going away, and she heard from her father that the Royalists had got scent of the fact that a Carlist messenger was to leave Barcelona with important information. So she put two and two together. Of course, she wanted to save him, and help him, and she didn't want to betray her father's plans.

"So she asked him to come here that morning and she had a bogus packet ready. Somehow she managed to change 'em. I shouldn't be surprised if she did it under his very eyes without his knowing it. A man is blind when he is in love, and the woman can do anything, and he wouldn't know a word about it.

"Well, he went off and thought he had got the packet safe; then she sent for me and gave me that very same packet to hand over to him when she thought the trouble would be over. And sure enough I did it! And I went to all that trouble—I made friends with him, dropped something into his wine while he was hunting for the dice, exchanged the letters during the five minutes he was asleep, giving him another bogus one in return for what I thought was the true document; and then I handed to him the real thing which I had been carrying about with me, and came back to Barcelona as pleased as Punch because I'd done a service to two people with one stroke as I thought. And that girl outwitted the lot of us.

"Of course, the old gentleman won't want her to marry Alzola, but she will. When the Carlist business is settled she will coax her father to get a pardon for him and he will give them a father's blessing like a lamb. A girl that can play a trick like that can do anything."

It is sufficient here to say that the Irishman's explanation was correct except in one particular, and that his conclusions concerning what would happen in the future proved equally accurate. He was wrong simply concerning the exact way in which Mercedes had effected the exchange, but on this point the reader will require no enlightenment.

George Day.

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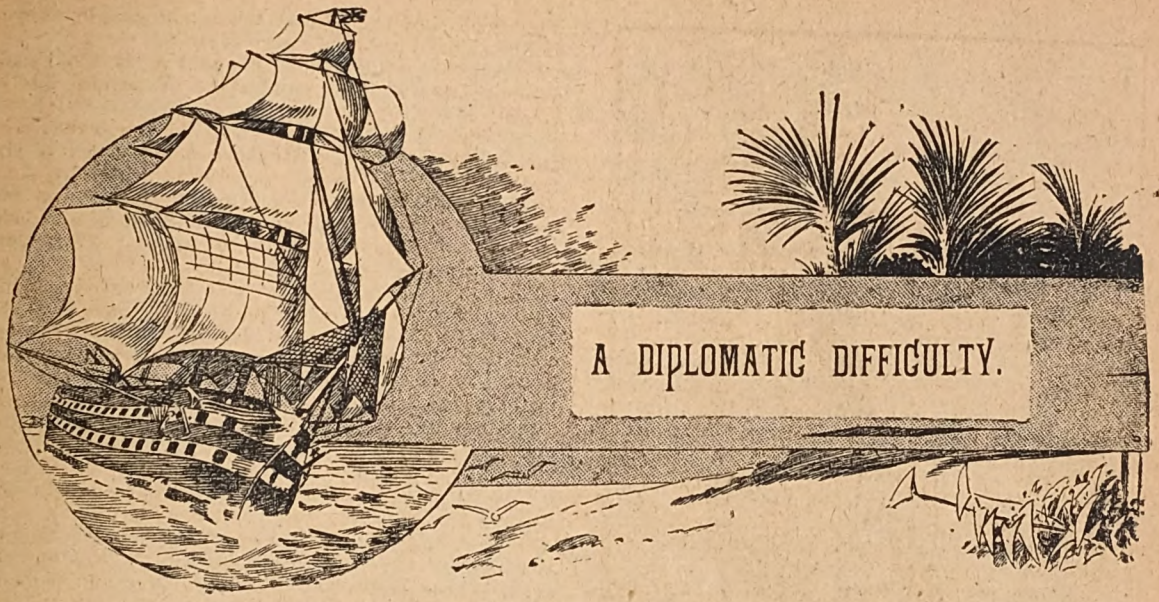

A DIPLOMATIC DIFFICULTY.

Señor Antonio Smith, Spanish Consular Agent at Hookport, U.S.A., found himself in a singular diplomatic position. He had just been notified by his Consul General that, relations with the United States being terminated, he was to turn over the archives to the care of the local Consular Agent of France, close his office, and depart.

This may not appear difficult, in view of the fact that Hookport was but a small place of two or three thousand inhabitants, so much fallen away from its earlier brisk trade with the West Indies that neither the Spanish nor French agent receives a call for official services half a dozen times in a year. So that for the little town one man, and he Anthony Smith, sufficed for both of the foreign consulates. His fellow-townsmen had also obtained for him the position of postmaster. He was also, incidentally, town clerk of a notary public.

This composite responsibility was taken seriously by Señor Antonio, M. Antoine, or plain Anthony Smith. Having much imagination, and quiet and limited surroundings, he magnified his offices; like a chameleon, he took colour from the circumstances of the moment, however often and suddenly they might change.

Smith was really an Englishman, who had spent years in business in Cuba and Martinique, and had been drafted to Hookport, where he had settled down.

In a room adjoining the post office stood two roll-top desks, precisely alike, occupying the two front windows. Above one of these desks was draped the flag of Spain; the tricolor of France overhung the other. The archives were few, but arranged with an eye to effect, and tied with many yards of red tape; the consular seals also were in evidence. In the windows respectively appeared the printed signs:—

Consular Agency of Spain,
Antonio Smith.
and
Consular Agency of France,
Antoine Smith.

And the same men who were hail-fellows-well-met with Tony Smith in the post office were gravely courteous with Señor Antonio, or politely festive to Monsieur Antoine at their Consulates.

At 10.45 on an April morning, the postmaster of Hookport, having opened the mail-bag, perceived among its contents a large official envelope bearing the seal of the Spanish Consul General and addressed to Señor Antonio Smith. Recent developments in regard to the political situation had prepared him for an international crisis.

He turned red, then pale; but he placed the packet in its appropriate box, and went on distributing the letters and handing out newspapers to the applicants outside the delivery window. When the rush was over, and only a few straggling individuals came in to inquire for letters, Mr. Smith called Foote, his assistant, and himself passed into the office of the consulates.

Thence, a moment later, he came out, and, presenting himself at a small window, asked cautiously:

"Señor Assistant Postmaster, is there anything for the consular agency of Spain?"

"Yes, señor," and Johnny Foote proffered the official document, which Señor Antonio took with a lofty expression of thanks.

Johnny Foote it may briefly be said, was a freckled towheaded youth, who adored his employer as the triple extract of all that there is of heroic and romantic, a bigger man than any to be found in history or in penny novels. It is true that the elaborate international parts which the official felt himself obliged to play seemed to Johnny a game. But it was a good game, indeed, Johnny judged; and in his awkward way the boy imitated and seconded his chief as best he could.

Señor Antonio carried away the document, retired to the desk of the Spanish consulate, opened the envelope, and read his instructions with an air of ever-increasing gloom. Then he shouted, "Ola Juan!"

The useful Johnny instantly appeared.

"Yes, señor."

"As clerk of the consulate agency of Spain you are now to learn that diplomatic relations between our government and that of the United States are terminated."

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"The paper said so this morning," interrupted Johnny Foote.

"We have not known it officially until this moment," corrected Antonio, and Johnny stood rebuked.

"In accordance with instructions from my Consul General," continued Antonio, "I am about to confide the archives to my honourable colleague the Consular Agent of France, Juan. It is your duty to carry them to him, and to safeguard them, if need be, with your life."

With this, Señor Antonio piled up the packets of papers upon the willing arms of his assistant, crowning the heap with the metal stamp of the consulate. Johnny set out with a measured step towards the other side of the room.

It had been the intention of M. Antoine to be seated at his desk, ready to receive the messenger whose errand his diplomatic sense must have foreseen. But, unluckily Señor Antonio in throwing away some useless papers let fall into the Spanish waste basket a pair of scissors which, before relations with the United States had become strained, he had borrowed from the post-office. In search for the scissors two or three minutes were lost so that when M. Antoine entered the office of the French consulate the messenger was awaiting him.

"Good-morning, Señor Juan," said the official, with a fine unconciousness of any crisis in affairs.

The messenger, who did not know what he ought to say, answered simply:

"Good morning, monsieur," and deposited the archives upon the desk of the friendly power.

M. Antoine viewed the papers with an air of sudden concern.

"Does this mean, Señor Juan, that Spain has severed her relations with the United States?"

"I should say so, monsieur," responded Johnny Foote.

The French Consular Agent wrote a receipt for the archives, rose to his feet and, handing the paper to the Spanish messenger, spread his hands eloquently above the paper of his new trust. "I beg you, Señor Juan, to convey this receipt to Don Antonio, assuring him that Spanish honour is safe with France, whose humble representative I have the happiness to be, and also present to him my personal condolences, with the assurances of my highest esteem."

This time, on his way between the two consular agencies, Johnny Foote delayed to exchange signals with a friend under a back window who wanted him to come out later to join in some sports. So that when he reached the Spanish desk Señor Antonio was sitting there in an attitude of noble grief, with an effect of having remained immovable for several hours.

Johnny delivered the receipt, and stated that "M. Antoine is going to pitch into anybody that tries to lay a hand on the Spanish things; and he is awfully sorry for you, señor, and thinks just as much of you as though you were not down on your luck. And so do I, by Jingo!" added the boy loyally.

Don Antonio silently arose from his chair; then, mounting it, he took down the Spanish flag, which he carefully folded and laid upon the desk; then, having removed the sign from the window, he placed it with the flag. He closed and locked the desk. His career as a Spanish diplomat was at an end.

He crossed the room and set to work to find places for archives intrusted to the guardianship of France. Johnny Foote, emboldened by the more cheerful looks of his superior, came to the side of the desk and stood fidgeting from one leg to the other. M. Antoine smiled at him.

"My good Jean (for Johnny was now attached to the French consulate), what can I do for you?"

"If you don't want me, monsieur, I should like to go out a little while with the boys."

"Ah!" murmured M. Antoine. "Without doubt. Go, my brave boy!"

On the square-hewed timber near the edge of the wharf sat a row of ancient mariners, talking as they had talked for the last twenty years. They were thoroughly acquainted with one another's ideas, but certain subjects seemed to be made to be rolled over and over again in their mouths along with their tobacco. When other topics failed the peculiarities of Tony Smith were a continual resource, and just now the political crisis, instead of overshadowing his personality, seemed to bring it more strongly to light.

"I expect," observed one of the elders, "that there ain't nobody in this country as much interested in the war as Tony Smith is."

"Well, you know, there's three of him, to view it from all sides," said another.

"Queer acting ain't he? Wasn't no mental afflictions in his family, was there?" ventured a stranger, a skipper, in for repairs to his schooner. He was promptly disciplined.

"No, sir," responded the captain, who had spoken first. "Good blood on both sides of the house. Anthony Smith is a likely young man excellent in every respect. Anything you observe that looks sing'lar in him is due to his stay in the West Injys. Manners and customs is different there from ours, of course, and Tony stayed long enough to soak 'em into his natur'."

The other old men nodded their adhesion to this diagnosis.

At that moment somebody saw a vessel rounding the point. By well-known features of its rigging it was made out to be the *Miranda*, Captain Soper of Hookport, master and owner, on its return from Matanzas, where it had gone four months earlier with a load of timber and salted fish. Its Captain, when on shore, was one of the chorus of elders who sat on the wharf to prophesy, and he had been much missed. His wife had accompanied him on the voyage, and her return with an assorted cargo of news was eagerly awaited by the ladies of the place.

A topic of conversation was not easily let drop by the sages. "First man that Captain Soper will want to see is Tony Smith," remarked one.

Nobody doubted it. Then the chorus took to professional appreciations of the course of the schooner.

The old Captains stood in a line on the wharf to welcome their crony and his wife. But everybody was surprised to see a third person with the excellent couple, a walking bundle of wraps that still was recognisable as a young girl. From under a "pumpkin hood" and above a worsted muffler gleamed a pair of magnificent Southern eyes. A Cuban girl!

"Our young friend, Miss Manuelita Garcia of Matanzas," Mrs. Soper told the captains.

The stay-at-home mariners now enjoyed the glory of informing Captain Soper that while he was on the sea, war had been practically declared

"It's a mercy that we hadn't been overhauled for a prize, and I feel thankful," declared the good man. "Now, I must see the Spanish Consul at once," he continued, "for I've got a letter for him from an old friend in Matanzas."

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By this time the boys had left off playing and come down to the wharf. Johnny Foote, as ex-clerk of the consular agency of Spain, spoke to Captain Soper:

"Spanish Consul's gone away, sir. But he has left his papers with the French Consul, and you can see him. He is there. And the postmaster, too, sir," Johnny added, as an afterthought.

"Eh?" said Captain Soper, for the moment puzzled.

"Tony Smith is there all right," explained one of the mariners.

"Oh yes, yes, of course. My dear, you see about getting the things on to some kind of a lighter and steer for your sister Byram's. I will run on ahead to see Tony, and you can overhaul me at the post-office."

The postmaster sat on the steps of the office alone and in deep thought; when he saw someone coming near, he threw a small object neatly behind some stones—perhaps forgetting who he was just then. Mr. Smith had been wooing peace of mind with one of the cigarettes of the departed Señor Antonio. He arose quickly.

"Glad to see you, Captain Soper. Welcome home again, sir!" he hailed, heartily.

But over the fine first careless rapture of the meeting was cast a shade of melancholy when the captain without ceremony, handed a letter to the postmaster, who at once saw the handwriting of a Cuban friend.

"From your old master, Don Serafino Garcia," said the Captain, cheerfully. "Good many years since he saw you, but he remembers you well, Tony. His wife has been dead for some time, and he was terrible put out to know what to do with his little girl. You remember Manuelita, I daresay. She must have been a mite of a little tot, at the time that you were there in Matanzas. She ain't but sixteen now. Well, m'wife just took to that sweet, pretty creature, and we've brought her home with us to stay for a time, at any rate till the troubles in Cuba are over.

"The way Señor Garcia talked about you! Tony, I thought he desired that you might take it into your head to marry her. Well, this letter will speak for him and I must go along now, for here are my women folks."

They made a picture as the ox cart came up the street, the two women seated among a heap of sea chests bundles, and a queer, fo eign-looking small black trunk. The boys had resolved themselves into a guard of honour. Johnny Foote bore the oxgoad, and gee'd in a friendly fashion at the big, lumbering animals.

"Heave to, there!" shouted Captain Soper, and the team was halted.

"Here's Tony Smith, my dear," said the Captain. "Miss Garcia, Mr. Smith."

One blue mitten, so spacious that it had an appearance of emptiness, was pulled off by some force concealed in its mate, and a slender, little, creamy hand was timidly extended towards Tony. As he took her slight fingers she lifted her black-fringed eyelids, and shot a soft, brilliant glance straight into his eyes, and down into the heart of Anthony Smith, of M. Antoine, even as far as the heart of Señor Antonio, late consular agent of Spain. That glance was a formidable projectile.

The ox team started again on its way, Captain Soper walking behind.

"You be sure and come up to see us this evening, Tony," Mrs. Soper called out to him.

"Thank you, ma'am; I will with pleasure if I can. But this is my busy day," he replied, vaguely.

He watched the group until it turned the corner towards the Byram house Then he thought of Don Serafino Garcia's letter, and went into the post-office to read it.

But it was addressed to Señor Antonio Smith, consular agent of Spain.

The postmaster sighed. "Not for me," he judged. Then he had the right idea. "That letter must be consigned to the French consular agent."

He looked round for a messenger, but Johnny by this time was probably helping to unhaul the ox team, so that Mr. Smith was obliged to carry the letter in person.

He laid it upon the desk of the French consulate; then seated himself and opened the envelope. Don Serafino Garcia wrote thus:

"My very dear and esteemed friend Smith."

"That's me—any one of me" noted M. Antoine with satisfaction. "I am committing no indiscretion. The letter is not of a personal nature."

But as he continued to read the loyal diplomat, he began to have his scruples. After some generalities concerning the state of the island and of business he saw these phrases, with increasing alarm:

"To you, most excellent friend, I wish to recommend my only daughter, Manuelita, the eye of my soul. To a father be it permitted that he speak plainly—if your heart, dear Don Antonio——"

Clap went the palm of M. Antoine over the ensuing words, that he might not behold them.

"This is too personal by half," he declared. "I have no right to learn the private affairs of my Spanish ex-colleague. That, indeed, would be indiscreet!" and he gave a very Gallic laugh and shrug.

But Postmaster Anthony Smith had heard what Captain Soper had said about Don Serafino Garcia's hopes, and M. Antoine had not been able to ignore the overtures to Señor Antonio.

There could be no doubt, the question must be settled then and there whether Mrs. Soper's invitation be accepted or not. Because it was certain that a few more glances from those glorious eyes of Manuelita would conquer the whole triple alliance of Smith. M. Antoine sat immersed in thought; finally he came to a diplomatic conclusion to this effect:

"Señor Antonio. Consulate Agent of Spain, has departed; officially he no longer exists; he is defunct. His affairs are, by instructions from his government, committed to the care of the French Consulate. Now in this time of crisis could a Spanish official wed a Cuban woman? That is the ultimatum in the case of Don Antonio. While I—M. Antoine, French Consulate Agent, am bound by international honour to remain strictly neutral, a state of mind quite incompatible with the lively affections which should be the basis of marriage.

"So I am out of it, too. But my opinion in this critical case would be that the postmaster, Mr. Anthony Smith, may, individually and officially, with great propriety, contract a matrimonial alliance with the daughter of Don Serafina Garcia of Matanzas, his old friend and employer."

Outside the consular window could be seen the boys returning from escort duty. Mr. Smith ran to the door of the post-office.

"Johnny!" he called to his factotum, "you run back and tell Mrs. Soper that I shall have the pleasure of calling on the ladies this evening."

Elizabeth Pullen.

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OUR HARDY ANNUAL.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO WITH 100,000 CHILDREN THIS SUMMER.

Tradition says that a drowning man sinks for the third time, and then finally disappears. The Fresh Air Fund has "gone under" seven years in succession, and now for the eighth time it makes its appearance as fresh as ever, and sets forth its usual appeal for assistance, not on behalf of itself, but for the benefit of the poorest children in London and our other large towns. Since the first appeal was made, no fewer than half a million children have been given a day's outing in the country through this agency.

There are, no doubt, a great many new readers of *Short Stories* since the objects of the Fund were last published. For their enlightenment let me say that each child gets a day in the country, with plenty of good food and drink, at a cost of ninepence, and this sum includes the amount spent on the railway fare.

The arrangements for the outings are made by the Secretary of the Ragged School Union, which society shares all the working expenses with the proprietors of *Pearson's Weekly*; that is to say, the Fund is not burdened in any way by having any expenses deducted from the amount subscribed. Every penny received is spent on the children, and I believe I am correct in stating this to be the only charitable institution in existence which is run on such lines.

Each year is worked separately from its predecessor or successor, the accounts being made up every September. Thus we get our "hardy annual."

It is hoped it will be possible this year to give a holiday to 100,000 children, and arrangements have been made for that number, provided, of course, sufficient money comes to hand. This means that £4,050 must come from somewhere. One half of the amount has been guaranteed to the gentlemen who have undertaken the work of carrying out the excursions in the different centres, and if the donations fall short of £2,025, the deficit must be made good by the proprietors of *Pearson's Weekly*. Such a calamity, however, is not anticipated. We start the season with nearly £300 which has come to hand during the winter.

But the desired end will not be reached without a lot of hard work, and appeals will be inserted from now until the end of September, asking for subscriptions. You, on your part, must worry your friends, and if you succeed in gaining their interest in the movement, go a step further and request them to mention the matter to their friends and acquaintances.

The list of towns and the number of children to whom it is hoped to give a treat in each is as follows:

Aberdeen, 2,000; Birmingham, 5,000; Belfast, 3,000; Blackburn, 2,000; Bristol, 2,000; Bradford, 2,000; Bolton, 2,000; Cardiff, 2,000; Dublin, 2,000; Edinburgh, 2,000; Glasgow, 5,000; Gateshead, 2,000; Hull, 2,000; Leeds, 2,500; Leicester, 2,000; Liverpool, 5,000; London, 40,000; Manchester, 5,000; Nottingham, 2,000; Newcastle, 2,000; Oldham, 2,000; Portsmouth, 2,000; Sheffield, 2,500; Sunderland, 2,000; total, 100,000.

Each place, of course, is worked according to local peculiarities. In some it has been found possible to carry out the excursions in co-operation with an existing organisation, while in others a special committee has been formed. The name and address of the correspondent or secretary in each case will be published next week. To print a full list of the committees would occupy too much space, and probably would not interest anyone outside the particular town for which they are responsible. If any person is so interested in the scheme as to wish to be in possession of all the names, no doubt the secretary will oblige him, on receiving a request to that effect.

The places to which the provincial children will be taken will be left to the local committees to decide. But so far as London children are concerned, they will go to Epping Forest, as in other years.

It has often occurred to me that people do not actually realise the position of the children of the very poor of our big cities. If they did, I firmly believe the whole of the £4,050 would reach these offices during the first week, instead of it being necessary to keep pegging away for subscriptions.

It seems scarcely credible that with all the existing organisations of one kind and another, there are still so many children who have never tasted the happiness of a day in the country.

Now supposing there are only one thousand children in London this summer who are in such a plight. A cheque for £40 10s. will make them all happy. Who will be the first to send that amount?

We do our best to pick out those who deserve a holiday—not those who have earned one by attending a Sunday or any other school, but children who, through no fault of their own, are too poor to get a little pleasure and fresh air. The question of religion does not enter into the matter. Let a child be poor and in want of a holiday, and the Fresh Air Fund steps in.

Having set the ball rolling once more, it is for our readers to assist us as best they can. Collecting sheets will be supplied to anyone sufficiently interested to ask for one. The offer of a gold-plated pencil-case, or one of *Pearson's Weekly* penknives to those who collect £1 or over, still holds good.

Amounts received will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly* from week to week.

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MICKEY'S PIG.

TOM CONNOR was the blacksmith over the hill. Mickey Finn was in the habit of running on errands for Tom, and so, when Providence sent a litter of pigs into Tom's sty, he picked out the smallest, most measly-looking pig in the litter, and gave it to Mickey.

Of course the boy was delighted, and he ran home with the squealing little porker under his arm.

Now, if there was anything of which Mrs. Finn was fond of it was fresh pork, especially when it was young and tender. But she had had considerable experience with animated pork in her day, and after looking at Mickey's acquisition with the eye of a connoisseur, she decided that the chances of the pig's ripening into plump hams and juicy chops were very slim.

"Now, Mickey, you take that rack o' bones wid no mate on it back to Tom Connor, an' tell him he might be up t' better business nor shovin' off his bones an' bristles on ye. Faix, he might as well be givin' ye a shtove grate. Luk at th' tail iv th' boneen! Musha, thare's no more twist to it than to a hoe handle!"

"But, mother, I don't want th' pig t' ate. I want to play wid him!"

"Play wid a pig, is it! Nixt ye'll want to be playin' wid Feeman's calf, so ye will. Oh, but you're a looney b'y; ye're out iv of yer sivin small sinses. Play wid a pig! Mebbe ye'd be puttin' pants on him an' feedin' him wid a spoon, agra. It's a quare lad ye are, me b'y, wid yer ould divil goats an' that black crow as has shiny beads in his head. Well, well, an' I wantin' t' make a ly'yer iv ye 'stead iv a dirty snake charmer or mautherin' vagabones as ye will be av ye don't shtop playin' wid animals! So, thare. Now, Mickey, take that pig back t' Tom Connor an' tell him t' give ye wan wid pork on his ribs an' fate worth picklin' on him. Now run, run awa'."

Mickey picked up the pig tenderly in his arms and went away over the hill. His heart was heavy; but Tom Connor cheered him up.

"Mickey," said he, "you an' I'll make a pen for the porker forenist th' forge, an' you can gather a little grass an' shtuff fer him. Mebbe he'll get fat. Thin ye mother'll be glad t' hav' him. We'll call the porker Darby."

The pen was built and Darby was duly installed therein. Under the fostering care of the blacksmith, and little Mike, the porker grew in size and plumpness, and endeared himself to Mickey by his many winning ways. The pig became broad of back and strong of limb. Darby's ears began to droop upon his neck, and he was very fond of being scratched between them with a piece of old iron. And so the days fled quickly by, filled with the joy of content.

But while the May days were slipping away into the eternities, Mrs. Finn had not been idle. Her boy's extravagant praises of Darby had awakened her cupidity anew.

Often while Mickey was at school, Mrs. Finn took sly trips over the meadows to the sty. On each of these occasions she always took with her some choice morsels which were calculated to increase Darby's girth.

Alas! however, Mrs. Finn entertained none of those fine sentiments of unselfish love for Darby which animated her son. She could see no poetry in the cork-screw curl of Darby's tail as he grunted with pleasure while gnawing last year's cabbage stump. Her finer sensibilities had been roughened by the sandpaper of misfortune. Each pound Darby gained meant no added grace and proport on to her, but rather suggested the salty pork barrel and the sizzling frying-pan.

During all this time Mickey's old grey-bearded billy-goat was suffering the torment of unrequited affection. Day by day the billy saw Mickey go by him on his way to the pig-pen. But once, in three weeks long, did little Mick stop and gambol with the goat as he had been wont to do in the sweet old days before the coming of the hated Darby. The goat seemed to be aware that the affections of his master were waning away from him, "like the twilight of an autumn day."

Only a litt'e sunlit hollow in Stumpy Field separated Darby and the goat. One morning, while yet the grass was bending beneath diamonds of dew, the goat came out of his barrel and stretched his legs. He looked off over the valley at the mists fleeing up the rugged sides of Snake Hill. He saw the faint flush in the east gradually deepen into a vivid blush of rose colour. Then he indulged in a little practice bucking.

While engaged in th s harmless amusement the billy became aware suddenly that he was a free goat, no longer bound by the galling clothes line. Billy, having satisfied himself that he was no longer a captive ambled over to Darby's pen. The pig was asleep. He, however, was soon awakened. There was a battering-ram at his gate.

Once, twice, thrice did that implacable catapult hurl itself against the frail pen. Then the hemlock groaned in pain; it cracked, it broke. Darby sprang to his feet and squealed in fright. The hoofed demon with blazing eyes and ragged bangs, full of hemlock splinters, was in the pen.

Then began an awful struggle. Urged by the billy, Darby was forced out into the field and bowled over and over down the hill. The billy attended strictly to business. No sooner did Darby get on his feet than he was called on in a most forcible manner to lie down. When Darby had once more got his trembling legs under him he made one supreme effort and ran up the hillside. His ascent was materially assisted by the goat. But Darby was going towards the lime quarry! In headlong, blundering flight Darby rushed madly on. The bushes fringing the brink of the precipice were parted by the maddening rush of thirty-five pounds of animated pork.

A faint squeal rent the air of the beautiful May morning there was a dull and sickening thud on the rocks below, and lifeless, but beautiful, Darby lay.

Before Mickey missed Darby his uncle drove up to the door and invited him to make a short visit to Greenage. After her son had gone and the breakfast dishes were cleared away, Mrs. Finn went to the sty to have a look at the pig. There the awful reality dawned upon her—the wrecked sty, the freed goat, and the missing pig. But when she found Darby in the quarry she made no moan. In fact, she smiled and bore the body home in her strong arms.

The next morning Darby was tried by the fire and was not found wanting, for his jacket assumed a rich brown colour and the savoury smell that rose from the oven was sufficiently appetising to make the tongue of a gourmet palpitate in his mouth. Then Darby was put on a big plate and placed in the oven. There were a number of guests at dinner that day, among whom were Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Cronin, Mike Welsh's wife, Patsey Corrigan's lass Nancy, and the one-legged accordion player.

Just as the guests sat down at the table Mickey returned, but his mother gave him a plate in the kitchen for certain prudential reasons.

Darby was indeed a beautiful sight, ornamented with sprigs of celery and with a fat lemon in his mouth. If he was lovely in life he certainly presented a very toothsome appearance in death. Mickey drummed upon the kitchen table with his knife-handle, because being the younger, he had to wait until all the rest were served. But at last a big piece of tenderloin was placed before him. To his shame be it said, he actually neglected the potatoes on his plate and asked for a second piece of Darby before he touched the potatoes.

It is with deep regret that the occurrence is recorded but Mickey's plate was filled a third time, and in this instance it was a choice cut from the plump ham of his little *protégé*. After he had been filled to repletion, after the buttons of his vest had been relieved of dangerous pressure, he leaned back in his chair with grease on his face and a peace-with-all-the-world look in his eyes. Then his mother turned to him and said:

"Mickey, did ye like th' dinner?"

"Yis, mother."

"Won't ye hav' another little bit aff th' neck—jist a thrifle dear?"

"No, mother dear. I couldn't ate it; I'm full."

"Well, darlint, ye won't be freckened if I tell ye somethin'?"

"No, mother, I will not."

"Well, that piece o' rib, an' that bit aff th' ham, ye're afther 'atin' kem off your Darby!"

If a bombshell had fallen at Mickey's feet he would not have been more startled. He leaned forward and big tears ran down his cheeks and mingled with the gravy in his plate. Then he laid his head down upon the table, and wept as if his heart would break.

A. Mondey.

IT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

You have only to look through the pages of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE to discover that it is the best and brightest magazine in the world.

The March Number is now on sale, price 6d.

Among the principal contents will be found:

PHOTOGRAPHING IN THE DARK.
A novel paper, illustrated with photographs actually taken in utter darkness.

WEARERS OF THE STRAWBERRY LEAVES.
Some interesting personal notes about our British Duchesses, illustrated with portraits.

THE NEW ART OF SELF-DEFENCE.
Describes how you may render yourself impregnable to any form of attack—illustrated with photographs showing how to overcome an assailant in every emergency.

BORES.
Describes and illustrates the most remarkable of tidal phenomena.

THE DOGS OF WAR.
All about the trained dogs of the Prussian Army.

UNDER WATER IN A DIVING TORPEDO-BOAT.
A thrilling account of a voyage in the American submarine-torpedo boat, "Holland," illustrated with photos.

With seven complete stories, and innumerable illustrations, printed on the finest paper, and inclosed in a beautiful cover—PEARSON'S MAGAZINE stands alone in interest and value.

A Pleasant and Instructive Competition for the Little Ones.

A CHARMING book has been issued by Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson Limited, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., containing a number of outline sketches of flowers, specially drawn so that they can be painted. A coloured plate of each flower accompanies the sketch, so that the child can pick out the necessary tints. The price of the book is 3d., provided that this notice be cut out and forwarded with the three stamps to the Book Department, at the above address.

The Editress of *Home Notes* is offering fifty handsome prizes to the children who best paint the pictures in the book, and in order to give all children an equal chance, the competition will be divided into two sections—children over 12 and under 16, and children under 12.

TO WIN ONE OF THESE you have only to send three stamps to the Book Department, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, W.C., asking for No. 1 of "Attractive Work." When you get it, paint the pictures and send it to the Picture Book Editor, Home Notes, Henrietta Street, W.C., not later than the first post on April 3rd. If a stamped envelope be sent for return, after judging the books will be sent back. If this is not desired they will be forwarded to the Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME.

WITHOUT doubt there are many readers of *P. W.* who heartily sympathise with the FRESH AIR FUND, but are unable to subscribe to it. It is now possible for them to do so, for everybody must use soap. To help the Fund, Messrs. Jeyes' Sanitary Compounds Company Limited, have promised to hand over a farthing on every 2½d. bar of their "Fresh Air" soap sold in the United Kingdom during the current year. It can be had from the vendors of such commodities all over the country.

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The Fate of the "Rosie."

"YES, I think the time has now come to speak plainly."

Two men sat facing each other across a table in the private room of the chief of the shipping-house of Brandon and Co. One was a man of nearly sixty years of age; the other was about thirty-two. It was the latter, James Burk, the chief clerk of the firm, who had uttered the above words, and the man to whom they were addressed was Richard Brandon.

The old man fidgeted nervously and raised his eyes in one swift glance at Burk's face. The look which he saw on that face was not reassuring, for he dropped his eyes, and his agitation increased."

"What do you mean?" asked Brandon, hesitatingly, with the air of one who already knows the answer to the question he has just put.

"Let me see," said Burk, musingly. Outwardly he was calm, almost indifferent, but to those who understood him it was a sign of mischief or some deeply-laid plan. "It was on January, the twenty-first, 1871, as near as possible eighteen months ago, that the *Rosie* went on her last voyage."

He was interrupted by a suppressed groan from Brandon, which brought the faintest shadow of a smile to his face.

"The Brandon vessels had, and still have the reputation for sea-worthiness, which is rare at the present time, when everybody is full of horror at the revelations concerning the going to sea of rotten vessels which have been called 'Coffin Ships.' The *Rosie* was not a seaworthy ship; her previous voyage had proved that she had reached the end of her career, but you sent her, heavily laden and heavily insured, to her doom, and the doom of the sailors on board was almost equally certain."

"Don't!" groaned Brandon.

"The ship was lost with all hands, and your purpose was effected. The firm was in the greatest straits owing to certain little transactions on the part of its principal, and the insurance money—which was largely in excess of the value of the ship—was quite a little windfall for you and enabled you to tide over the crisis. From that time things have gone far better and the firm is now prospering. I am the only man who knows what you did to save yourself."

He had leant forward to speak the last words, and as he saw Brandon's face grow still paler, the wicked smile again flitted over his lips and he sank back in the chair with an expression of triumph in his eyes.

For a moment the old man remained silent, then he rose from his chair with flushed face and sparkling eyes and burst forth fiercely:

"Burk, you are a villain! It was *you* who prompted me to do it when I was weak and ill, and overwhelmed with anxiety at the crisis which I had brought about by unwise speculations undertaken with the object of increasing the amount that I should leave to my daughter.

"In a weak moment, when I scarcely knew what I was doing, you whispered the tempting words to me—you took advantage of my weakness and made me do it—I did what others were doing, and are still doing. I saw no evil in it at that moment, but I swear to Heaven that I believed the crew would be saved. The ship had not gone one day when I awoke to the awfulness of my crime. Oh, Heaven! How bitterly I have repented it; how it has haunted me during all these months."

Exhausted by his outburst, Richard Brandon sank into his seat and covered his face with his hands.

"It is lucky that the door is padded to prevent confidential conversations being overhead," remarked Burk coolly. "Otherwise the clerks outside would have heard your little confession. I would advise you not to talk so loudly. In your righteous indignation,"—with a sneer—"you forgot to mention that you made use of the insurance money without scruple; you did not tell the insurance company that it was not just to accept it, and as to blaming me, that story will not hold water with the outside world when they learn all the facts; moreover, you are old enough to be responsible for your own actions."

"I won't say another word about it," returned Brandon, with just a show of firmness. "I had my scruples; but to have rejected the money would have meant ruin and disgrace. One crime necessitates another. What more do you wish to say?"

"As the manager of this concerned, I am entitled to more of the benefits than I now obtain. I am a bachelor and your daughter is twenty-one. I mean to marry her. That is brief and to the point, I think. In that way I shall inherit your fortune and business, and so reap the reward of my labours."

"Rosie will never consent to marry you!"

"I know that I am not the object of her affection," returned Burk, "but that is not a matter of importance. She is in love with Captain Manning, who does not find favour in your eyes. I mean to marry your daughter, and you must assist me, otherwise—— Well, the story of the *Rosie*, named after your dead wife and your daughter, would cause some sensation just now, would it not?"

Brandon groaned in anguish, but he felt that he was in the power of this man; it was either disgrace and ruin or the sacrifice of his daughter.

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"Leave me now," said Brandon brokenly, "and I will give you your answer to-morrow." Burk arose, pushed back his chair and left the private room without a sign of the triumph with which his heart was filled.

Two hours later Richard Brandon was pacing up and down his small study, awaiting the entrance of his daughter. "I will tell her all and leave it to her to decide. Oh, my child!" These were the words he continually repeated as he walked about the room.

"Oh, here you are, dad! I have just come in and I understand that you wish to see me in a great hurry. It must be something very important."

The words were spoken in a merry tone and the remark was rounded off with a happy laugh, as Rosie Brandon ran to her father, put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him heartily.

"But what is the matter?" she continued, her voice changing to a tone of anxiety and her pretty face clouding. "You don't look well. Oh, dear, I hope that dreadful business is not going to make you ill again as it did nearly two years ago!"

"Sit down, my dear," said her father gently, leading her to a chair. "I have something very serious to tell you. Heaven knows if I can tell you!"

Wondering, and with a vague sense of fear, all her brightness gone, Rosie sat down, while her father stood before her trembling in every limb. It was a situation almost unendurable; he had to confess to his daughter, who looked upon him as the very model of honour, a crime similar to that for which other shipowners were being held up to public execration. For crime it was, although others might call it "business."

Slowly, with bent head and downcast eyes that never once sought his daughter's face, the old man related what had taken place in his private office that afternoon.

When he had finished, he waited for her to speak, but no sound came from her lips.

There was dead silence for a few seconds, then Brandon cast a swift glance at his daughter's face, as he had done previously at Burk's and the great change which had taken place in the countenance of his beloved daughter, nearly broke the old man's heart.

"Oh, Rosie, help me in this great trouble; I cannot hand you over to this man, yet I cannot bear to think of the disgrace that will fall upon you. For me, I am old and it will be easy to escape justice and the sneers of men!"

The dreadful underlying meaning of those last words aroused Rosie to the reality of the position. By a great effort she obtained control over her emotion and spoke quietly although with a slight quiver in her voice.

"The vessel went down in a storm, so I have heard; but I have not taken much interest in business and you tell me very little, because you say that I am not to be worried by office troubles."

"It foundered and all hands were lost."

"But *did* it founder?" persisted Rosie. "Vessels sometimes remain afloat for years, we often read of derelicts."

"The vessel had not behaved well on her previous voyage and I have no doubt that she went down. I know that derelict vessels float for months and even years over all the seas, but if by chance the *Rosie* had floated in a waterlogged condition, as others have done, it would not alter the fact that I sent her to sea when she was not seaworthy. It is a part of my punishment that my crime should be brought home to me by continually reading reports of the sighting of derelict ships, and the thought that one is the *Rosie*. I almost dread to read the newspapers lest I shall see such a paragraph. It seems to burn its way into my very soul; the letters float before my eyes like a grinning spectre, I can hardly bear it."

He staggered to a seat. His daughter came and knelt before him.

"Let us try to face the trouble fairly, and see which is the best way out," she said very tenderly. She felt that it devolved upon her to be brave, and to stimulate this utterly crushed and dejected man to action.

"Father, have you tried to follow any abandoned ship?" she asked.

"Yes, my child," replied her father, wearily. "But such ships are like phantoms; you meet them unexpectedly, but when you wish to meet them, you may hunt the oceans for years and not see them. One was caught, but it was not my ship, and I have told you"—more wearily—"that it would make no difference in my guilt."

"Then I must marry Burk, or disgrace and ruin will fall upon us?" she asked.

The old man bowed his head in assent.

"Then I will marry Burk," she continued firmly. "Have no fear, father; it is the duty of a child to sacrifice herself, if needs be"—she could not quite control her voice at this point—"in return for all the love and care bestowed upon her. Filial duty is as great as parential duty, and I will not be found wanting."

"It must not be, I cannot bear it," cried the shipowner, with a return of energy. "It is too dreadful. I would rather that disgrace fell upon me and—not upon *you*. Oh, unhappy wretch that I am!"

"Leave it to me, father," said Rosie gently, taking his hands in hers as she arose and kissed him. "Let Burk come here and receive his answer from me."

That evening a cablegram went to New York addressed to Captain Arthur Manning of the *Merrie England*. It was handed to him just before the vessel started on her homeward voyage and made him open his eyes in surprise.

On the following afternoon, when Mr. James Burk, as well-groomed as ever, called at the Brandon residence, he found Miss Brandon awaiting him. She was self-possessed, and made no pretence at ignorance of the object of his visit, but went straight to the point with a brevity which rather amazed even that collected individual.

"You wish me to marry you," she said coldly, "and you are using your knowledge to force me to this union. You are aware that I have no affection for you?"

"My affection and admiration for you," he replied suavely, "will in time cause you to return my love. I am convinced of that."

"This marriage will be hateful to me," she went on. "Is there no alternative?"

"None."

"Then I must consent," said Rosie, scornfully. "I do it to save my father, and I do it on condition that the marriage must not be announced for three months. You must agree to that, although you wish it to be made known at once."

"I do; but I agree."

"And I warn you," continued Miss Brandon, "that during those three months I shall use every endeavour to thwart your present plan. If I do not succeed in that time, I must resign myself to be your wife. I think there is nothing more to say now."

"Nothing," he said, taking his dismissal in his usual

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cool manner, "except that I admire you all the more for your spirit. I will leave you now."

"That's a fact," he murmured as he walked briskly towards the railway-station. "I admire that girl; she's got plenty of go. We shall make a splendid pair. James, you're getting on!"

He continued to be of that opinion for the next few days; he was more affable to his subordinates than was his wont, which somewhat mystified them. Then there came a change which disturbed the smoothness of the water upon which he seemed to be sailing.

Brandon and Burk were seated in the private room, the former signing cheques for current accounts—for although Burk was now really managing the business he had not obtained authority for that purpose. They were interrupted by a clerk, who handed a telegram to Mr. Brandon. It was marked "private" on the outside and was from his daughter; it ran thus:

Telegram from Manning. *Rosie* picked up close to Azores. No doubt.

"Anything fresh?" queried Burk, as the shipowner folded the telegram and placed it in his pocket. Burk had an uneasy suspicion that the telegram concerned him.

"Merely a few words from my daughter," replied Brandon, evasively.

But Burk was not many hours before he guessed at the contents of the telegram. It could not be kept a secret from the shipping world that the *Merry England* had towed into "Queenstown" harbour an abandoned vessel supposed to be the long-lost *Rosie*. This was a check to his plan, but he did not give up hope of winning.

The fact that the vessel had floated and braved all weathers for so long a period in a water-logged state did not upset the idea of unseaworthiness; he still had a hold upon Brandon who although he believed that the ship was not in a fit condition to be sent on a voyage, had nevertheless allowed it to go.

After a few maledictions under his breath Burk recovered his equanimity for awhile, although at times a certain fear oppressed him. His equanimity was destined to be totally upset by what followed when Captain Manning arrived in London.

He received a note from Miss Brandon asking him to call with reference to their undertaking. He was not quite easy in his mind concerning the object of this visit, but he was never a man to draw back.

He went, leaving Brandon in the office. Whether the ship-owner knew or not that he was going to call upon his daughter, Burk could not quite determine.

He was ushered into the study where he found Captain Manning, whom he of course knew quite well, as he was in the employ of the firm, and Rosie Brandon, who looked prettier than ever. He was not left in doubt for more than a few seconds as to the reason why he had been summoned there.

"Mr. Burk," said Rosie, when he was seated, "some re-arrangement of our agreement will be necessary after you have heard what Captain Manning has to say concerning the derelict."

"I am all attention," returned Burk with a polite bow.

"It is soon told," said Manning, a man of about the same age as Burk himself and who had attained his present position purely owing to his ability. "I did not include it in my official report on the finding of the *Rosie*, because I thought it better to mention it to you privately.

"The *Rosie* did not founder, but her crew feared that she would not weather the storm and so took to the boats. Unluckily, as often happens, all the boats appear to have been capsized."

"That is not fresh intelligence; we all know it now," said Burk.

"If she did not founder," continued Manning, "it was not the fault of one member of the crew. It is recorded in the captain's handwriting that a seaman was discovered in the act of scuttling the ship, and on being caught he confessed that he had been paid to do it by——Warm, isn't it?" queried Manning sarcastically, as he noticed Burk's flushed countenance.

"It's a lie!" cried Burk, loosing his self-possession.

"The man signed a confession, which the captain wisely drew up while the man was still under the influence of fear as to the result of his misdeed. To that confession was attached a few words in hand writing familiar to some of us.

"I found these documents in the captain's chest on board the *Rosie*. Unfortunately, the man had so far done his evil work that the ship was looked upon as doomed and she was abandoned. This seems to have been an error of judgment on the part of the captain."

"The evidence is against you, Mr. Burk," said Miss Brandon, interrupting. "The exact nature of your scheme I am unable to fathom, but I have discovered enough to know that you were trying to obtain a hold on my father. The *Rosie* never was unseaworthy; it was you who told my father that she had behaved badly on her previous voyage, and you wished to complete your plan by causing the ship to sink and so confirm your statement."

"I think there was no other reason for scuttling the vessel," said Manning before Burk could speak. "The note I have mentioned contained a reference to a sum of money and specie to that amount was on board the ship."

"There is sin on both sides," said Rosie with a chastened air, "but yours is the greater. My father's was committed in illhealth and overwhelming anxiety; yours in strength and it was premeditated. It will be better to bury the past and go on our separate ways.

"I told you I would thwart you if I could. I had read that the abandoned ship had been seen in the Atlantic and in my desperation I cabled to Captain Manning with my father's consent, to keep a look-out and to spend a day in searching for her, which he could do as he had no passengers. It seemed a hopeless task, but providence intervened and rendered possible that which seemed impossible. Our agreement is at an end."

She walked slowly to the door and opened it.

All the bearings of the position passed rapidly through Burk's mind, but he felt that he would not further his own ends by revealing all, even if he escaped punishment himself, and his genuine admiration for the girl decided him to accept the situation.

Ignoring Manning, he bowed polite to Rosie and passed out.

They never saw him again.

Soon after Manning was managing the business of Brandon and Co., for Brandon never really recovered from the effects of that terrible strain which had been too great for his weak constitution, and he died shortly after Rosie's wedding.

G. Knight.

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A Chilian Incident.

WE were lying in the stream with the top-sails hanging in the buntlines. Everything was stowed ready for getting under way. The night was very dark, and the sky was obscured by lumpy clouds. It was dead calm, and the water was smooth and streaky.

Gantline and I sat on the forecastle rail, watching the lights of the city and small craft anchored closer in shore.

It was quite late, and our last boat had come aboard some time since, bringing our skipper, Jack Green, his pretty daughter and two passengers. At daylight we would clear with the ebb tide and land breeze with the early morning, and then, with good luck, we would make an offing and stand away for home. We were sick of the war-ridden country, and even the town of Valparaiso itself offered no attractions for us.

While we sat on the rail we heard a slight rippling in the water ahead of the vessel. It sounded as if a large fish was making its way slowly across the bows. We listened in silence for some moments while the sounds came nearer. I looked aft and saw two figures in the light from the after companionway, and I recognised Miss Green, and the smaller of the two passengers standing close to the hatch.

The sounds in the water interested me no longer, and I gazed rather hard at the figures aft. The two passengers, who were missionaries on their way home, had been aboard ship several times during the last week, but they had always been so reserved in manner that I never once thought to see one of them talking to a young woman.

Suddenly, I heard a sound of someone breathing, followed by a smothered oath, coming from the direction of the rippling water which drew more and more beneath us.

"*Ha! Vola! Hace bein tiempo, manana*—lingo gets crossways of me gullet," came a deep voice from the black water.

"Och! stop ye blathering ijiot, an' kape ye sinses. If them's dagoes on watch 'twill be all up with us. Whist, then! Ye men on the fo'c'stle?"

"What's the matter?" asked Gantline and I in the same breath.

"Faith, an' if ye have a drop o' th' milk of human pity in yer hearts, ye'll give two poor fellers a lift out o' this haythen country. Say not a whurd, but let us come on deck, quiet like. If ye don't the blood av two innocent men will be upon yer sowls. Spake aisy."

"Now what kind of man is this?" asked Gantline, as a naked man climbed slowly up the martingale stays and crouched close to the starboard bow, out of sight of the man-of-war lying near us.

"By th' luck o' Lyndon! Is this old Tom Gantline who talks? Why, man, we've just escaped from th' prison on th' beach. Don't ye remember me? I'm Mike McManus, only cousin to Reddy O'Toole who used to be mate with ye."

"No, I don't remember you," answered Gantline, "but if you had said you were anyone else you would have gone overboard again fast enough. No one but a chip of O'Toole would have come out here in this tide-way, right under the guns of that man-o'-war. Who's with you?" and he peered over at the man who still clung to the bob stays as if uncertain whether to trust himself on board or again swim for it.

"That's a man called Collins. He got taken along with me, when we was smugglin' in the rifles, up to the north'ard. Whist! below there, come up and make yerself known amongst friends. We're safe."

"I ain't so certain about that," growled Gantline,

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"what am I to do with you but put you ashore? I can't run the risk of having the vessel overhauled for such fellows as you."

"Ah, shipmate, ye haven't the heart to turn us over, when all we've done was to try and land a few rifles fer thim poor fellows. Oh, me boy, ye haven't seen the inside of wan of thim black iron holes on th' beach, to talk of puttin' us ashore again. Six whole months behind them steel walls an' niver see th' sun rise or set! Now, ye may be in sympathy with Chilly, bat ye have the look av a sailor man for all that."

As he spoke he climbed to the cat heads and drew himself gently to the top of the t'gallant forecastle. He was followed by the man, Collins.

They crouched shivering behind the capstan and I saw they were in a bad condition. They were wasted and gaunt, and their flesh had a soft, sickly look, as if they had spent a long time in close confinement.

Gantline stood irresolute a moment, looking at their shivering forms. Then he glanced sharply at the man on watch, who walked in the port gangway. It was too dark to see him distinctly, so trusting that he in turn had seen nothing of what had occurred forward, he started aft.

The two figures I had noticed a few minutes before had now disappeared.

"Keep quiet," I said to the naked men whose teeth chattered in the cool night air. "Lie flat on deck until he comes back and perhaps we can do something."

The man, Mike, was about to make some reply, but at that moment the fellow on watch came close to the edge of the forecastle.

I stepped quickly in front of the man, and in doing so trod on a projecting foot which cracked horribly, and, twisting, brought me down in a heap upon them. A deep groan told of the damage done, but I instantly regained myself and began to hum a song in a low bass voice.

The man on the main deck stopped a moment and looked hard at me, but it was so dark he could see but little, and my singing reassured him, so he turned again and went off.

In a short time Gantline returned with a bundle.

"Now, bear a hand there, you men, and put these clothes on in a quarter less no time," he whispered. "Come, hurry up."

And he passed a shirt and a pair of dungeon trousers to each.

"Och! he has broken me toe off," groaned Mike, slipping on the garments.

His companion dressed rapidly in silence.

"Now then, up you go, both of you, into the fore-top and lie out of sight 'till we get to sea, and if I see a hair of your heads inside the next twenty-four hours I'll turn you both over on the beach. Here, take a nip apiece before you go," and he passed a small bottle to the men.

Gantline's seamed and livid face wore an anxious look as he took his place beside me and acted as if nothing had happened to seriously interrupt our former conversation. We sat a few moments discussing our stowaways and then went aft to get a little sleep before clearing.

I turned in and lay awake thinking of the men in the fore-top, hoping nothing would occur to make it necessary for more than one man to go aloft there. The sails were all loosed, except the fore-royal, and this I would go aloft for myself.

It was past midnight before I lost consciousness, and it seemed almost instantly afterwards Gantline poked his head in my doorway and announced eight bells. I turned out and found it was still dark, but a faint light in the east told of the approaching day.

By the time the men finished their coffee, Captain Green came on deck, and then he gave the order to "Heave short." In a few minutes all was noise and bustle on the forecastle head.

Then we broke clear and swung off to starboard with the fore and main yards aback. Then we came round and stood out with the ebb tide, the light breeze sending us along with good steering way.

We had gone clear without mishap, but although we were making six knots an hour off the land, we knew the breeze would not hold after the sun rose. As we expected, it fell shortly after, and we lay becalmed a few miles off shore on a sea of oily smoothness.

The passengers came on deck to take a last look at the harbour and their voices sounded pleasant to the ear as they held forth on the beauties of a morning in the South Pacific.

These passengers had engaged berths more than a week before we sailed, and since then were almost inseparable. Their clothes were of some dark material, much alike in cut, but their faces and head-gear were in marked contrast.

"I was speaking to those poor fellows in the prison there, only yesterday," the younger one was saying as I came aft, "and I did my best to cheer them, but they were both much set against spiritual consolation, and the one McManus stole my pocket-knife with its saw blade which I used to carry to cut cocoanuts."

"How do you know it was he who took it; might you not have lost it?" asked the big man with a smile.

"Do you suppose I would bear false witness against any man?" replied the younger in a tone of reproach. "I noticed he came close to me while I was praying for him, and felt his hand touch me, but did not know my loss until after I left the prison. It will do him little good, however, as he and his companion in crime are to be shot this morning."

"Ah!" said the big man in a deep voice.

We drifted slowly all the morning, and about noon the sea-breeze set in from the southward and sent us along at a comfortable rate. Nothing occurred to make it necessary for a man to go aloft in the fore-top, and those who had gone up the main and mizzen in the early morning had noticed nothing unusual. The platform in the top was as large as that in a full-rigged ship, so the men who were hiding were not visible from the deck as long as they lay flat on their backs.

Gantline had decided to tell the skipper the whole affair of the night before, but the old man was in such a bad humour that the mate delayed telling him until the prospect of a serious burst of anger was less apparent.

The day wore on and the vessel held steadily on her way, making from eight to ten knots an hour.

After supper the skipper came on deck with his passengers and they were soon joined by Miss Green. They sat aft and chatted, the men smoking and very much at their ease.

There was something in the younger passenger that attracted Miss Green to him. There was a mysterious power about the man that was apparent to anyone after being an hour in his company. Something in his deep, vibrating voice, when he was talking, appeared to hold the attention, and I, more than once, looked at him as he sat next to the skipper's daughter, holding forth on matters of the church.

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Captain Green was still in a bad humour, because of his low freight money, and it was evident that he would ease his pent-up feelings on someone.

He had listened to the talk of the missionaries with ill-concealed contempt, whenever they fell to discussing their ecclesiastical affairs, and now he asked the younger abruptly, when he was to return.

"Ah!" replied he, "I shall return as soon as possible, for my flock will get along poorly without me. I have converted many chiefs, who wrangle among themselves, as has also my friend here."

The skipper turned with a look of disdain at the big-bearded man, who appeared to understand the implied interrogation, and hastened to answer. "It is true, I have converted many," he said in a low voice, "but I shall not return to the Islands of the Pacific, for I think there is a better field nearer home. Not that I believe my labours wasted, for the converted natives never stole anything but ammunition and utensils, while the others stole everything from me they could lay hand to. Not that the effort was entirely in vain, I say, but that better work can be done among our own people, such as sailors, for instance."

"Eh! What's that?" growled Green as he listened to the last part of this sentence; "What do you mean by sailors?" and his eyes flashed ominously.

"Why, go among them, and see that they get the proper books in the libraries sent out on vessels for them to read, for instance."

"Now you are talking some sense. Instead of whining around among a lot of good-for-nothing niggers, like your friend here, you'll really do something if you follow that up. Yes, sir, if you'll only put something in these libraries besides 'Two Years before the Mast,' and the like, and get some police reports nicely bound, along with some yarns like 'Davy Crockett,' you'll be a blessing to sailors, and skippers, too, for that matter. No, sir, don't play with those islanders any further. They were all right before they ever saw the likes of you, and they've been all wrong ever since. You talk like a man of sense, after all, and I hope what I've said won't be lost on you." And as he finished his peroration, he stood up and looked astern.

"Hallo!"

Before the astonished missionaries could say a word the skipper started for his glasses and seizing them, he looked steadily at a faint trail of smoke which rose above the horizon directly in the vessel's wake.

"That's strange," he muttered. "There's no steamer bound out to-day, and yet that fellow seems to be standing right after us."

"Mr. Gantline!" he called, as he turned where the mate stood. "Go aloft with the glass and see if you can make out that fellow astern of us."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Gantline, and he took the skipper's glass and made his way leisurely up the main ratlines.

From the lower top he could see nothing but a black funnel, and masts without yards, so he went higher. On reaching the cross-trees he looked forward, and there, lying prone on their stomachs, were the two hiding men.

Their eyes were straining at the vessel astern, and even if Gantline had not already made out who she was one look of those faces would have told him. He came on deck and returned the skipper's glasses without a word, and then started forward, but Green stopped him.

"Could you make her out?" he asked.

"Well, there isn't much of her rising yet, but I suppose she's the *Blanco Encalada*," he answered.

"Seems to me it is hardly time for her to put to sea," growled the skipper, "and she's making almost the same course as we are." And the old man turned back to his passengers.

Before two bells in the first watch that evening, it was blowing half a gale to the southward out of a clear sky, and the old ship flew along on her course.

There was no sea running, so she heaved over and drove along at a rate that bade fair to keep the *Blanco* below the horizon for several hours. As it grew late the air became quite chilly, and the skipper went below with his passengers.

The moon rose and shone with great brilliancy, so that our towering main-skysail must have been visible a long distance. All night we drove along with nothing visible astern, and at daybreak the hull of the steamer was still below the horizon.

At seven bells Green came on deck.

"Now what's he after?" he growled, as he gazed astern. "It is the *Blanco*, after all, Gantline; but what makes him hold on like this? We are going to the westward of Juan Fernandez, and that is more than a hundred miles out of his course."

The mate made no answer but went on with his work.

"It's just like those dagoes to go running all over the southern ocean for no other purpose than to wear out their gear and burn coal," continued the skipper. "If this wind keeps slacking up, he ought to be abreast of us before noon, though I never knew this old trooper to go at the rate she's been doing all night. Breakfast did you say? Mr. Gantline, you may let her head a point more to the north'ard."

Saying this, the skipper took a last look at the approaching warship and then disappeared down the companion-way.

Although the vessel still raced along at a rate that sent the foam flying from her sharp clipper bows, she was no longer doing her utmost, and the *Blanco* rose rapidly in her wake with the black smoke pouring from her funnel.

Suddenly, while Gantline was watching her, she appeared to be enveloped in a white cloud of steam. Then there was a sharp, shrieking rush as something tore its way through the air close to the mainyard, and struck the smooth sea almost half a mile ahead, folllowed by the sullen boom of a heavy gun.

The rush of the shot brought Captain Green on deck, closely followed by his passengers.

"What's the matter," he bawled, as he rushed to the taffrail, while the younger passenger, who had followed close at his heels, smiled grimly.

The *Blanco* came driving along heavily a couple of miles astern. She was rapidly drawing up.

"Wants us to heave to, I suppose," growled Gantline, and he eyed the skipper suspiciously.

"Man alive?" roared Green. "Why don't you do it, then, before he cuts the spars out of us? Fore and main royals, there, quick! Let go by the run. Main clew garnetts.—All hands!" And the skipper bounded on to the poop, and cast off everything he could lay his hands on.

The ship was soon luffed and her main yards backed. Then the *Blanco* came abreast and all hands had a chance to look into the muzzles of her ten-inch guns which were trained toward us. A swarm of men crowded the deck of the ironclad, while a boat shot out from her side, and

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approached us rapidly, with a short, thick-set man in uniform sitting in the stern sheets.

Green stood at the break of the poop, scowling at him as he swung himself lightly into the mizzen channels, and leaped on the quarter deck, followed by six men. Hardly had he done so, when the younger of our two passengers drew a heavy revolver from somewhere behind his back, and fired point blank at this officer.

The Chilian was in the act of drawing his sword, and the hilt was across his breast at that instant. The bullet intended for him struck the hilt and flattened on the brass. The next instant there was a rapid fusilade, the six Chilians firing together, and the passenger with a six-shooting revolver in each hand, backing away behind a cloud of smoke.

It was all over in half a minute. Three of the bluejackets were dead and their officer badly hurt when the firing ceased. The passenger tossed his empty pistols over the side and staggered aft and not one of the survivors dared to follow him. He gained the after companion-way, and as he did so the figure of the Captain's daughter appeared on deck.

I could see her face pale as she caught the look in the passenger's eyes, but she said no word. He went to her and kissed her lightly and passed on to the starboard taffrail. The Chilians now recovered themselves and rushed for him. He climbed over with difficulty, but did not hesitate. Then he plunged headlong into the sea before anyone could seize him, and as we rushed to the side we could see his body sink slowly down into the green depths until it finally vanished.

The skipper, Gantline, and the big missionary stood looking on in amazement, and then the wounded officer turned toward th' m.

"That was Senor Jose Zacaticar—of course you did not know," and he nodded to the skipper. Then the dead were placed in a boat while a tourniquet was passed round the officer's leg to stop the flow of blood until he could reach his ship. In a few moments he and his men were on their way back to the *Blanco*.

Green stood staring after them without a word. The name of the dead desperado was too well known to him to protest against the manner he was treated while on an English ship, but he desired some explanation.

The *Blanco* dipped her colours and he came to his senses. "Hard up the wheel, there," he bawled. "Stand by the lee-brace," and the vessel paid off again on her course.

The ironclad headed away to the northward and in a few minutes was a couple of miles away.

"I met him only a week ago," explained the big missionary, in answer to the skipper's look, "and I thought, of course, he was what he claimed to be."

Green gave a grunt and went aft.

"Mr. Gantline," said he, as he met the mate, "are there any more missionaries aboard this ship, for if there are, we will put them ashore on Mas-a-fuera."

"There are two more," answered Gantline, looking the skipper in the eyes.

"Show them to me," said the skipper.

Gantline went forward and looked aloft.

"Come down from there!" he bawled, and two lean figures stood in the fore-top and then painfully descended the ratlines before the astonished gaze of the crew.

When they gained the deck they followed the mate aft to Green, who stared at them in amazement.

"We are off soundings and that fellow has no right to board me," he said, "but if you belong to that Jose gang, I'll signal for him to come back for you."

"Faith, an if we did, Captain Green, it isn't such a crowd av cutthroats as ye seem to belave," said McManus. "The fact is, we're just broke away from bein' shot for no more than the carryin' av a few Remingtons. I see ye remember me, so for th' sake av auld times ye better give us a passage home an' not make Crusoes av us on the Farnandez."

Green looked at Gantline.

"It's the truth," said the mate.

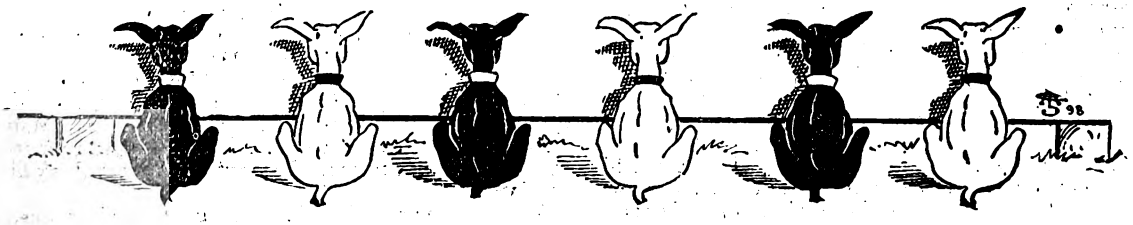
"Who says it's the truth? I'll——"

At that moment a slight figure appeared at the companion-way and the next instant Miss Green seized her father's arm. He turned roughly, but there was something in the poor girl's face that made him look at her. She led him below and the escaped men stood staring after her.

"You fellows can turn to with the men forward," said Gantline, and they went.

A little later Green came on deck again and stood looking silently over the bright Pacific. He stood there by the taffrail looking long at the eastern horizon. No one approached or spoke to him for all knew Green when his mind was full of unpleasant memories.

ARTHUR SELBORNE.



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BOOK IV.—CONCERNING A SOJOURN - - - AMONGST THE DAJIANS.

CHAPTER I.

How Sneyd and O'Neill landed on Daji: how they were imprisoned in a prehistoric temple: how they tried to break gaol: how they met with an impediment: and how they had an unexpected lady visitor.

SAVE for the summit of its central peak, and the tops of some of the ridges which shoot out of it like the rays of a great stone star, Erma, as viewed from the sea, was one great collection of greens, varying to all shades It looked fertile, and it did not belie its looks. The place was a tropical garden.

It is impossible for soil that is capable of sustaining plant life to be barren in the tropics. But you could see, as you approached it, that a larger part of Daji was bare and barren. Steep sterile rocks rose in gaunt ridges from the vegetation in the lower ground, and stood out bleakly against the warm skies beyond. Nothing grew on them. They were utterly destitute of soil. Even the teeming orchids, which are independent of mould to grow in—even the orchids whose lovely uncouth forms swarmed everywhere else, left these stony wildernesses to their chilly barreness. Only the screaming seafowl tenanted the crags. They were not dependent upon soil. The seas around were their hunting ground. The bare wind-swept rock was the roosting-place and nesting-ground they preferred to all others. Besides, the crags were for the most part steep and precipitous; and man, the biped who ruled below, being wingless, could not annoy bird, the biped who reigned in the air above.

Thus the island of Dagi was divided, and I think that the feathered portion of the inhabitants had the easier life of it, for food was always to be had for the fishing, and sickness was unknown. But with the men and women it was different. Starvation was an item which had very often to be calculated in their economy of daily life. Their husbandry was crude perhaps, but the ground suitable for cultivation was small. There was a great deal of swamp on the lower part of the island, and mangrove bushes reticulated over this in hopeless luxuriance. The ubiquitous cocoanut palm was there of course, but not in large quantities, and the other fruit trees did not bear in any generous profusion. There was, in fact, just a little less than enough of everything; and life on Daji was consequently often very hard.

Neither Sneyd nor O'Neill saw the island as the fleet approached it. Still securely lashed to their respective poles, they were lying like logs in the bottom of a big canoe. The tepid bilge-water swished over them as the vessel at the laboured seas. The crew trod over them as though they had been sacks of ballast.

They were not starved. Twice since their capture food and water had been stuffed down their throats. But for all that, they were in a very miserable condition—stiff, cramped, sore.

The passage was not a pleasant one for anybody. Stores were few. An army in full retreat is not generally overloaded with luxuries. But every voyage has an end somewhere, either on a shore, or in mid-sea, and this was no exception to the rule. Save for one which broached-to and got swamped, all the canoes were safely beached on Daji, where they were unloaded of what they happened to have in them, and then run up high and dry.

All the population which had been left behind flocked down to the shore. In time of peace the postal arrangements between the islands consisted of one canoe-load of news per annum. During the war there had been no communication whatever. So a good many married women suddenly found themselves widows, and a number of old men learnt that they had no longer a stalwart son to support them in their failing years. It is the fortune of war that such things should happen; still these people were desperately angry none the less, and sought to vent their fury upon the only two representatives of the island of Erma within reach—to wit, Laurence Sneyd and Murtagh O'Neill. And indeed they would have proceeded to glut their passions by tearing these unfortunates to shreds, had not their captors interfered, and pushed the agressors on one side with scant ceremony. They had had all the trouble of bringing the two white men across, and they were not going to have them wasted merely to gratify petty spite. The two prisoners could not atone for all the Dajian youths who had been killed. Besides, the pair were destined for another fate. They would die surely enough, and that soon. But they were destined for the oven, and it was no use mauling them about first, and rendering them unfit to eat.

Actuated by these humane sentiments their captors carried the two Europeans up to the nearest village, placed them in a hut for the night, and posted a guard to see that no malicious person came near and damaged them; and having supplied them with food, they left them to their own devices.

Directly they found themselves alone, the restless pair as usual set about trying to get free. By dint of severe exertion, which in their then weak state told heavily, they

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contrived, by rolling over and over, to get alongside one another—heads and tails, and then each selected a part of the other's lashings, and began steadily gnawing it in one spot.

Well laid-up grass rope is tough stuff, and unsatisfactory feeding at the best of times, and just now they found it desperately dry and unpalatable; but as men will, who are in such a plight, they stuck grimly to their self-imposed task, and divided it fibre by fibre. Sneyd had got but half-way through his rope, when O'Neill's gave in two; but the gross result of each man's work was the same, for at that moment one of the guards showed his head in through the doorway, renewed the lashings, rolled the prisoners to opposite walls, and made each fast there by a heel rope that was quite unget-at-able.

"There," said the guard; "now do keep quiet, and give me no more trouble."

"We'll just have to do that same, ye spalpeen," growled O'Neill; "thanks to this last piece of delicate attention. Begob, av I could get loose an' die quietly fightin', it's little more I'd ask. But to lie tied up here, like a bullock waiting to be pithed, is a thrifle too much for me nerves. It makes me restless, an' inclined to feel dangerous an' murthersome."

"I'm not going to give up hope till I've got my throat cut," observed Sneyd. "I was pretty much down in the mouth just before that first shave. It was a near thing and no mistake. If the messenger had been ten seconds later, he'd have been too late for us. But when we got off then, my spirits went up with a bound. I felt sure we should escape somehow. I made certain, though, Sandy would contrive to help us."

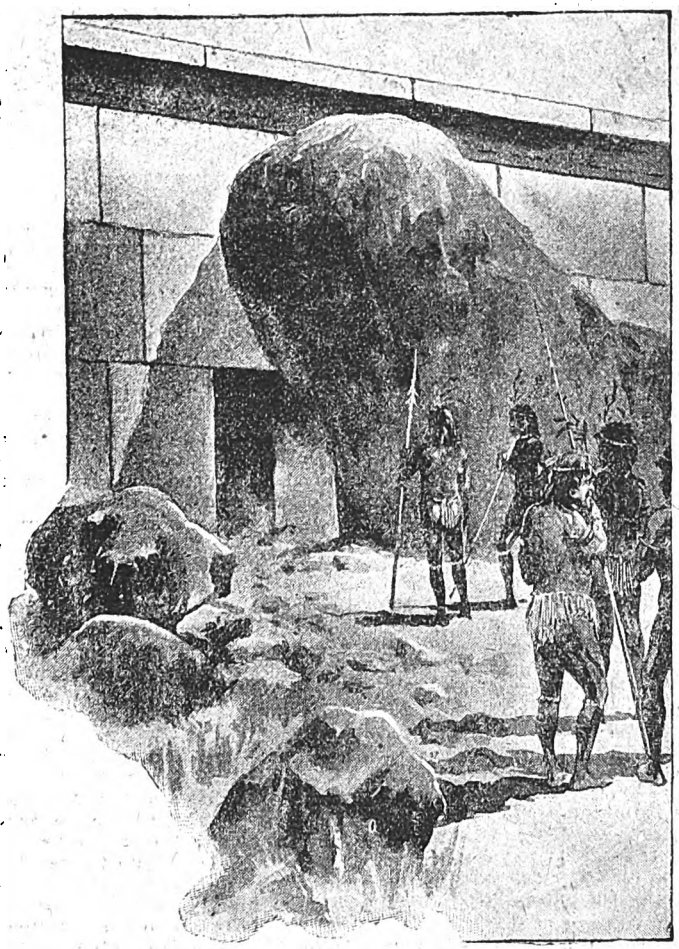
"And Sandy didn't. He's as dacent a bhoy as iver stepped, an' would have done anything that was widin his power to get us clear. But the fact remains that he didn't manage it, whether he thried or not; and the result is, we're here."

"He might contrive to come over and carry us off."

"He might," replied O'Neill drily. "But we can rest pretty sure that he won't. I don't think these Daji blay-guards got much of a licking. I believe they left Erma principally because they'd had a bellyful of fightin', an' wanted to get home widout further loss o' men in small give-an'-take skirmishes. But they've the sthronger force left still, an' it's a very small mouthful of the Ermans they'd make av they came over here, dhrum, fife, army, and baggage, wid Sandy Carmichael marching at their head. No, I don't think we can count much upon that."

"I wasn't altogether thinking of an invasion in force," said Sneyd. "But I was hoping that Sandy would scheme some idea for making a quick raid with a few men, and getting us away before more than a dozen people knew we'd gone. I've heard of such things being done in the continental wars at home."

"Ay, but who is it that makes those sort of dashes? A clever officer and a party of picked men. Sandy may be the one, if you like, but his following couldn't be the other, however they were chosen. You might pick amongst those naygurs in Erma as carefully as you liked, but none of them would be 'picked men.'"



The Europeans found themselves before a square building.

O'Neill's words were paradoxical, but the meaning of them was incontrovertable. There was no combination on Erma capable of making a successful foray in an enemy's camp. Assistance could not be expected from without. And as at present their bonds forbade them to help themselves, there was nothing for it but to await the course of events as stoically and philosophically as might be. And so, having arrived at this conclusion, and judging from the Irishman's snore that he had done the same, Sneyd shut his tired eyes, and fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

The sun was high above the mountain tops when they were awakened. If left to themselves, the intense weariness which their recent hardships had engendered would have doubtless kept them in Morpheus' arms still longer, despite the hardness of their cold earthen couch, and the merciless tightness of their bonds. But at that time a number of Dajians entered the hut, and rudely kicking them into wakefulness, proceeded to examine them much in the way that men in the farming interest at home here examine animals at a fair. The savages pinched their arms and legs, prodded them in the ribs, and were evidently much disgusted at their condition. Both were sinewy and lean; one might use the word emaciated, in fact; and Sneyd in particular, who was always a spare man, would now, so one of the connoisseurs affirmed, be as unsatisfactory feeding as the husk of a dropped cocoanut.

The committee of inspection shook their heads gloomily. These two white bearded prisoners they had taken so much trouble about, and expected to prove such delicacies on the table, turned out very unsatisfactory when subjected to a close inspection. They were simply not worth cooking as

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Sneyd hurried to the brink, and looked down.

they were now. There was nothing for it but to keep them, and supply them with plenty of fattening food till they got into better condition. And so an order was given, and the two Europeans found themselves once more being borne like logs on men's shoulders.

Though treated with more care now, the means of progression was far from being a pleasant one. The boughs of overhanging trees scratched their faces; the jolting of the bearers made the ligatures of grass rope cut more deeply into their arms and bodies. But the thought that another respite was before them, gilded these minor discomforts, and made them feel that the journey was not without its pleasant side.

The route lay up a valley, for the first part a long narrow pathways fairly tunnelled through masses of rank foliage. But as they climbed upwards, the vegetation thinned and grew scantier. It consisted mainly of stunted bushes and wind-distorted trees, with patches of scrubby grass interspersed with fallen boulders, and outcrops of mother rock. There was no vestige of track, and the place was evidently but very seldom visited.

After a while the cortége stopped, and the Europeans found themselves before a square building of time-worn plain stone blocks, and topped with a heavy cornice. In the middle of the side facing them was a great rock, bent, so to speak, to an angle, which had equal arms. One of these arms, or limbs, was lying on the ground when they came up; but a couple of the escort climbed up on to the summit of the other by means of steps evidently cut for that purpose and their weight made the stone slowly revolve till the other limb rose in the air and disclosed a doorway.

Through this the Europeans were carried. Their bonds were cut, a quantity of food was placed down near them, and the escort withdrew. The stone door was swung back into place, and they were alone.

But though unfettered, it was a long time before they regained the use of their limbs. Through being kept for so long in one fixed position, their muscles had got stiff, and their extremities were half dead from the tightness of the ligatures which had bound them up. But by degrees they got their cramped fingers to resume their natural functions and after a vigorous course of massage, they rubbed the circulation back into their other limbs, and were able once more to stand upright.

No one will doubt what they did first. Just then, they were men with but a single idea. Their whole minds were absorbed in the one question of escape. And so they set about examining their prison with a view to this end. It was a plain square, built of great blocks so accurately dressed that they fitted too closely one above the other for the blade of a penknife to be inserted between them. Needless to say, it was not the work of the present race of Dajians, or even of their racial forefathers. It was the outcome of that forgotten civilisation; the work of that old people which once inhabited the great continent which the Pacific has submerged, and a few of whose monuments are still to be seen on the peaks of Polynesia.

But for the history of their gaol, these two men cared not one rap. Only one thing led them to examine it. They wanted to find a way out.

They inspected the doorway first. Sixteen feet through the thickness of the wall, was the great block which slid across the portal. So accurately did it fit at the sides, that not a ray of light from the bright glare without shone through into the gloomy passage. So closely did it press on the threshold flag below, that no lever's point could have been pressed in to prize it up, even had they possessed a lever to try with.

"Evidently," as O'Neill remarked, "the porter was always stationed outside."

Next the walls of this strange old-timed temple—for temple it undoubtedly was—came in for their share of scrutiny.

"I've heard," said Sneyd, "of pivot blocks which will turn if they are pressed at the right point."

So they tried every stone in the lower course in turn, thrusting against both ends of each with all their combined weight, and not desisting till they had gone methodically the round.

"That cock won't fight," observed O'Neill as he sat down for a minute's rest, and wiped the streaming perspiration from face and forehead. "An' we ain't sthrong enough to heave the whole wall-side over bodily. What do yez say now to climbing up to the top?"

"It would be a very good idea, but not being flies, I don't exactly see how we are to carry it out. The stones are five feet thick at the very least, and they fit far too close together to let us drive pegs into the spaces between them, even if we had the pegs to drive. Remember they've taken our knives away."

"There's wood enough in this jungle of brush and scrub which fills the place to make pegs of av we wanted 'em, and at a pinch we could sharpen 'em wid our teeth. But the bhoys that built the place masoned it too nately to let any one play that sort of prank wid their work. I only suggested climbin' up to see if yez could knock out an idea."

"I'm afraid it's beyond me," said Sneyd, musingly. "But," he exclaimed, as if struck by a sudden happy thought, "but I don't see what is to prevent us from undermining them. Of course the foundations will be deep, but if we work hard enough, and are allowed sufficient time, we should be able to drive a passage under them into the open outside."

"Begob now, but that's a great notion."

"Of course," continued Sneyd, "we shall have to exercise caution. We mustn't go and delve a great chasm, and just chuck the stuff we take out all in one big heap at the side. When the fellows come to bring us food, they would see that in a moment, and lash us up again pretty sharp, or take some other measures to keep us safe. They are not altogether fools, you know. The thing will have to be done with caution. We must take out one big block of roots and soil all in a solid piece, and put that on one side. Then we must start digging beneath, pound the stuff we take out into small dust, and scatter it about beneath

the bushes where it can't be noticed. Then when any one comes, we can clap the lid on our hole, and then none of them will be any the wiser about what has been going on."

"Here," exclaimed O'Neill, "are a brace o' sharp-edged flat stones—shovel an' pick combined—let's begin before the grass grows any longer under our feet."

Getting out the first surface slice in one unbroken wedge was a longer job than had been anticipated; for the ground was one mass of interlacing roots, and the tools were but ill adapted to cutting them through. However, by continual exertion and vigorous effort, the tangled mass gave way little by little; and at last, breaking adrift from its moorings altogether, was hoisted out and laid carefully on one side. It was quite intact, and as all sides sloped inwards from the top, it would always fit in its place without falling into the cavity beneath.

Then they started on the matter below. It was almost wholly made up of loam that had been formed by successive generations of plant, that had grown, died, rotted, and been replaced by others. The *débris* they scraped out was easily disposed of too; for it was easily disintegrated, and so could be readily sprinkled about, and got out of sight.

The excavation deepened apace, and the spirits of the miners rose accordingly.

"Av the blayguards don't get hungry, an' ate us before we're nicely fat, I don't see why with reasonable luck they should eat us at all."

"Not unless they turn up suddenly, and unexpectedly, and twig what's going on. And even if the lid did happen to be in place, we're as grimy as a pair of navvies—skin, rags, everything plastered with this black mould. If we'd only water enough to wash in, it would be all right, but as it is, I don't see how we are to get it off."

"Faith, then we'll let it stay where it is. An' av they ask any questions, we'll just say we were grubbing for roots—which is a fact—an' to prove it, we'll just tear up a big hole right in front of the enthrance there, so that they can see it for themselves."

So they made their decoy, and then went back and delved in the more important hole. This had gone down six feet now, sloping towards the wall; and for the last eighteen inches or so it had laid the stone bare. There was no signs of the foundation yet, and so they worked on without any feelings of disappointment. The labour was hard. To avoid bringing more *débris* to the surface than was absolutely necessary, they kept the diameter of the hole to the smallest possible minimum that was compatible with any moving about, and so their positions when down below were very cramped. But the loam yielded easily when they got past the region of living roots, and it could be scraped up by the digger as rapidly as the worker above could dispose of it by sprinkling under the bushes. A couple of rude baskets, woven from withes and leaves, aided this process, and whilst one was being emptied above, the other was replenished in the pit below.

He was evidently disappointed that they had not laid on more fat.

And so they went on till, when about eight feet below the surface O'Neill, who was digging, uttered a fierce exclamation. Sneyd hurried to the brink and looked down. The Irishman was scraping furiously away at the bottom of the pit, accompanying his strokes by a torrent of invective against all things in general, his own luck in particular.

"Eight blessed fut of cave dug, wid the sweat on our brows an' the bark off our knuckles; an' then to be brought up wid a round turn like this. Howly wars! it's enough to make a bhoy chuck up the whole business in disgust. An' what did the fools that built the place want to be so luxurious for? Betther men than them has lived an' died in a cabin wid a mud floor. Bad scran to them, what for did they want to go and lay down a tesselated pavement? Misdirected haythens; why couldn't they have stuck some beams across the wall-tops and shoved their flag-stones a-top o' them, by way of a roof? They've got their flure caulked as tight as the end of a whiskey-keg, sorra leak about it; oh, y'have come to look?"—This to Sneyd, who had asked what was the matter.—"Then see there. See that paving-stone. I've been grubbing around on all sides. The whole place is floored with 'em. Look at the way the edges of thim fit. Not room for a thumbnail between them. We've no chance of tearing them up. They are cemented together. Even if we had knives we couldn't shove a blade in the chinks. I guess this road's blocked for good."

"Not a bit of it," retorted Sneyd. "We can't prize those stones up, and we can't cut them through, because we've neither chisel nor pick; but if we stick to it long enough, we should be able to beat away at the corner of one of them with other stones, till we have splintered a piece off. Then, once a hole made, we can surely muster brute strength enough to wrench something away."

"For an idea suggested on the spur of the moment," said the Irishman, "that's the best I've heard for some time. But I don't know how it will act. The bastes that built this place were fond of heavy stuff, an' these flags may be a yard thick, for anything we know. And even av we do get through the stone, there's a hape more quarrying to be done before we're under the foundations, an' still more before we sniff outer air again. It's a wintry lookout."

"It might be better," Sneyd assented. "But I don't see that we have any other chance. Anyway, we may as well stick to it. Tumble up and let me take a turn."

The pavement did not prove so thick as O'Neill had feared; but fifteen inches of solid stone had to be pounded and splintered away, before the under surface was reached; and then, so firm was the cement in which it was set, the remainder of the flag had to be disintegrated before it would quit its bed. Beneath this, to their unutterable disgust, the unfortunate men came upon a layer of concrete, so hard as almost to defy their fiercest attacks. The stones

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they pounded it with ground away piecemeal, without producing any appreciable effect on th adamantine surface. But by almost imperceptible degrees it was worn down, and if they had been allowed time, they doubtless would have penetrated it in t me. But a *Deus ex machinâ*, in the form of a Dajian, put a stop to their efforts.

As the reader is quite aware, these interesting cannibals had placed their prisoners into the old temple to fatten, and not to contrive an escape. Food was brought in every two days; and the bearers, after satisfying themselves that the captives were safe, withdrew without further inspection. Every week the chief who owned them came and looked at his stalled white men in person, and examined them, to see how much flesh they were putting on, with callous familiarity.

This went on for a month, and then the old rascal considered that the feeding process had gone on for long enough. He was evidently disappointed that his captives had not laid on more fat, and fingered their hard stringey muscles with a comical expression of disgust. He could not understand how men, who, as he thought, did nothing except eat and sleep, could remain so lean and sinewy; but giving up the problem in despair, or solving it by supposing that thinness was in the white man's breed, he stalked out of the enclosure, giving some instructions to his followers as he went.

"Did you hear what that old reptile said?" exclaimed Sneyd, as the stone swung across the portal, and they were once more alone.

"No; what was it?"

"He was telling his men that he would have us cooked on the second day from this. He said it was a waste of time and good victuals to keep us talled here any longer."

The Irishman's jaw dropped. "The game's up," he said. "It's no use going on wid the tunnel. Av we were through that infernal concrete, which I don't think we are nearly, two days isn't sufficient to get under the wall an' up again t'other side."

"I don't think the game is altogether up," replied Sneyd doggedly. "We've managed to scrape clear so far, and I truly believe luck will see us through. At any rate, I've got my hands free now, and when those brutes come to take us away, they'll find me rather hot and heavy to hold."

"That, of course," replied the Irishman. "I'm not going to have my throat slit like a pig now. Not if I know it. I'm going to go down, warm and comfortable, in a dacent scrimmage. Begob, av we got over on either side of the enthrance yonder, we could make it awkward for anyone who tried to come in. I can rig up a sweet weapon out of a hard stone, an' three or four of these thin springy shoots, by way of a handle. The clubmanship we learned in Erma'll come in handy for fingerin' that."

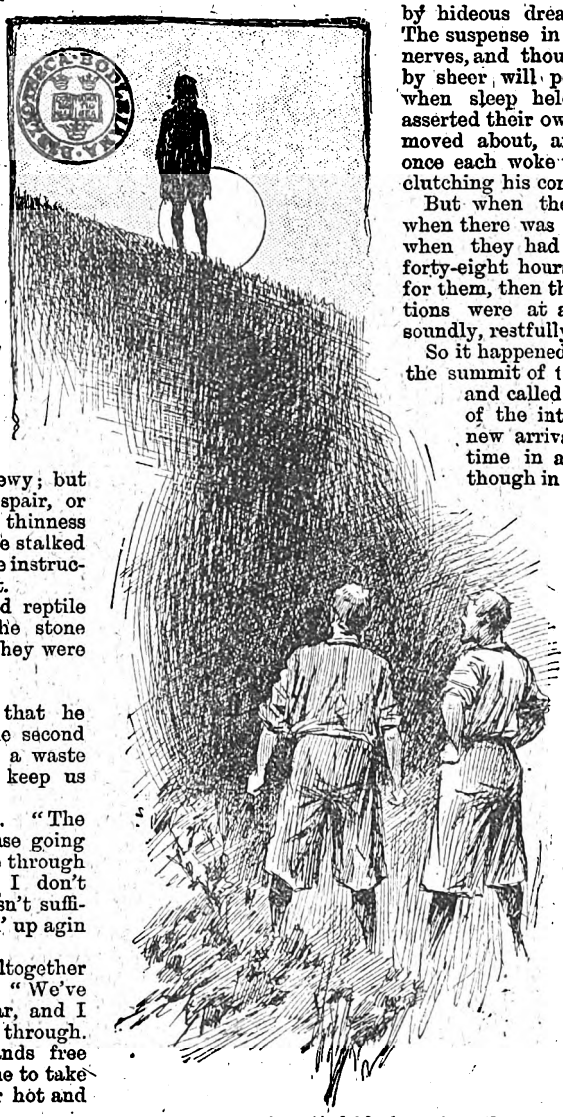
"Well, you see," said Sneyd, "there's a chance. We can brain all those who have pluck enough to venture in, and then go out, kill the cowards who have stayed outside, and afterwards make for the hills. Very likely there won't be a dozen altogether. There certainly won't be twenty."

So, having come to this vigorous resolve, they set about making the weapons, with which they hoped to carry it out.

During the whole period of their imprisonment up to now, the slumbers of these two men had been disturbed by hideous dreams, and torturing nightmares. The suspense in which they lived acted on their nerves, and though they quelled the excitement by sheer will power during the waking hours, when sleep held sway, the mental disorders asserted their own. They talked excitedly; they moved about, and gesticulated violently; and once each woke up, half-strangled, to find he was clutching his companion by the throat.

But when they knew a day had been fixed, when there was no more agonising uncertainty, when they had been definitely warned that in forty-eight hours' time the butchers would come for them, then their suspense and their speculations were at an end, and they slept calmly, soundly, restfully.

So it happened that, when a figure appeared on the summit of the temple wall far above them, and called their names, neither was aware of the intrusion, and neither woke. The new arrival called, and called again, each time in a louder voice; and at last, as though in desperation, bawled out with full lung-power.



Norah was silhouetted black against the moonbeams.

O'Neill rolled over, rubbed his eyes, yawned, and hailed back: "Ahoy there!" He had just dreamt of sailing back to Erma with Norah, and imagined that a boat was rowing up and trying to speak to him.

"Ahoy there!"

The voice called his name again.

The Irishman leaped to his feet. "Great powers!" he exclaimed; "is that you, Norah?"

"'Tis," replied the girl. "I made a bamboo ladder, and climbed up. I've come to help you."

"It's a dear, kind angel y'are," replied O'Neill. "But you shouldn't have ventured in this haythen counthry. But, Norah, darlint," he continued, as another thought struck him, "have yez a score or so of the Erma bhoys at yer pretty heels?"

"No, Murtagh, I'm alone. I came for your sake. I thought I might save you. And if I was too late for that, I'd have let the Dajians have me too."

Sneyd was awake by this time, and had grasped the situation.

"Can you pull your ladder over, Norah, and lower it this side?" he asked.

"That's what I intended," she said; "but I've been trying, and I can't lift it. The thing's too heavy."

Sneyd gave a low whistle.

"I know I'm a fool not to have brought a rope as well,"

Norah continued, with evident tears in her voice; "but I thought I could lift the ladder over. I made it in the woods, and brought it here in two pieces, and then tied them together. Each half was heavy, but I could carry it. How silly of me not to see I should never be able to lift the two together."

Here she broke down completely, and O'Neill was fully employed in throwing up scraps of verbal comfort. Sneyd meanwhile bit his moustache perplexedly.

"Norah," he said at last, "could you make a rope?"

"Ach now," interrupted the Irishman; "don't bother the poor wee child any more. Don't yez see she's done her best an' av there's a slight mistake, 'tis cruel to throw it in her pretty teeth."

But Norah, quick to catch any hint that would help her lover out of his danger, caught at the words immediately.

"Yes, I can weave a rope as strong as you wish for; and then—yes, I see. I could lower down an end, and you could climb up. I will run away and commence at once. It will take some time, but this place is seldom visited by the Dajians, and likely enough they will never see me."

"Can't you get it finished before daylight?"

Norah was silhouetted black against the moonbeams which were streaming in from behind her. They saw her shake her pretty head.

"No," she said; "it would take a long time to plait. Besides, I must get the grass first. No, day would be well up before I could get it finished. But what does that matter? I came to save Murtagh. I am not afraid. The little risk does not scare me. Don't fear, I shall bring your rope."

"Me darlint," exclaimed the Irishman; "Yez shall do nothing of the kind. You have run a million times more risks already than our paltry carcases are worth. Besides, we have till the day afther to-morrow, they said that this afternoon. So do you stay in the woods an' take your time over it; an' then when it's night, if you've got the rope made, and you're sure the coast's clear, why, then, it's plazed an' proud we'd be to see yez again."

"Good-bye, Murtagh dear."

"Good-bye, Norah asthore. Mind an' hide yer laddher. If any of the blayguards saw it, the sight might put them on yer thrack."

"All right. Good-bye, Sneyd."

"Good-bye, Norah, and take care of yourself."

Norah disappeared, and the Irishman turned to his companion.

"Isn't that girl a thrump? The queen of thrumps? Av any man was to say he could point out her aqual, I'd call him a liar, no matter who he was. But, man dear, my feelin's before was peaceful compared wid what they'll be now. 'Tis torture I shall be sufferin' so long as I'm alive, an' that sweet darlint's on this infernal island. Just fancy av one o' them devils was to catch sight of her."

O'Neill paused, trembling violently.

Sneyd put a hand on his shoulder.

"We must hope for the best. My presentiments have been right so far, haven't they? Well, I can assure you, I'm confident that it will come all right in the end."

(To be continued.)

A Dual Personality.

It was one of our Friday night symposiums at the Cosmos club, and as our particular clique was made up of Merton, from the geological survey, Herring of the Fishery Commission; together with Long, from the Agricultural Department; Forrest, of the medical staff and myself, then serving as correspondent for a Liverpool paper, it is needless to say that the talk had run the entire gamut of art, literature and science, and had for the moment settled on the belief in dual personalities.

"I tell you, gentlemen," said Merton, with the authoritative air by which he always attempted to settle questions under discussion, "that while I am willing to admit that there may be some things almost impossible to prove or disprove scientifically, yet this talk about dual personality, subconscious mind and all such stuff is nonsense."

And he lay back in his chair with a self-satisfied air, as though there was nothing more to be said on the subject.

Long took up the argument, and the debate grew rather warm.

Dr. Forrest had thus far taken no part in the discussion, but had smiled once or twice at our assertions in a way that assured us, who knew him so well, that he had a good story to tell if we could only draw him out.

"Come, doctor," said Long at last, "you ought to know something about this question, for you told us last week that you had studied under Charcourt when you were in Paris."

Forrest selected a fresh cigar from the box at his side, lighted it in his usual careful way and blew a few rings of smoke, which he watched float lazily to the ceiling, before he spoke.

"Well," he began, "as Merton has just said, there are some things which we cannot as yet decide by purely physical methods. We cannot weigh the soul in our most delicate balance, though the scale sinks if we add but the fraction of a hair, nor can we by our most subtle reagents analyse that vital spark we call life in our laboratories. I do not care to-night to speak of the many curious phenomena which I witnessed during my studies in Paris, for they might furnish you with a clue to the story which is to follow; but I'll tell you a little incident in real life, which occurred when I was very young in my London practice, and then to leave the question for you to decide.

"When I established myself in the metropolis fresh from my studies at Vienna, I joined the Bohemia club.

"We were a rather jolly lot at the Bohemia, for we worked hard at our different lines all day and then met at the club in the evenings for relaxation and to compare notes. You see we were young then, and not authorities in our several branches, as you all are here," and he smiled in his quizzical way as he looked round our little circle.

"There were two men in the club," he continued, "both M. D.'s, and although greatly alike in their features and wonderfully so in their dress, they were totally different in character, and I suppose it would be hard to find in

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any club two men further apart in their moral and mental qualities. Whiting had been a practising physician for a year or more and had already a large connection. He was a splendid fellow, large of frame but straight as an arrow, with great brown eyes that looked you squarely in the face when he spoke, and, with all his physical strength, kind and gentle as a woman. He was loved by every one at the club, where we knew him as the soul of honour and generous to a fault.

"Davis, on the other hand, he was enough like Whiting in features to be his twin brother, had a sneering expression on his face, and when he looked at you with his eyes half closed and that cynical smile on his lips he made me think of a snake.

"He was a heavy drinker, and spent money enough at the club, but he was never known to do a kind act, and we were sure that he never spent a shilling on anyone unless he saw that he would gain some advantage in return.

"Both of the men had ample means of their own, but Davis had never practised, so far as we knew. Where he lived no one seemed to know. Some said that he was an expert chemist and dabbled in alchemy as well, but he made no close friends, and seldom spoke of his own life.

"It happened that Davis and Whiting had never met at the club as each came but seldom, but we often chaffed one about the other, and from their facial resemblance dubbed them the two Dromios. Jekyll and Hyde would have been more appropriate, but this was long before Stevenson's book was written.

"Whiting always resented any chance allusion to his double, although good-natured at the rest of our chaff, and seemed to doubt the actual existence of Davis, whom he had heard of but never met, and thought we were simply trying to have a game with him. Naturally, the more he scoffed at the reality of Davis the more we nagged him, until finally in sheer desperation he proposed to give a quiet little dinner for four of us, at which Robinson, an artist and fellow club-member, myself, Davis and Whiting were to be the quartet.

"Davis promised to be there, if possible, and said he was already acquainted with Whiting—of course by reputation only, he added with that cynical smile we all hated. On the night of the dinner Robinson and I were there early, for we were anxious to see the meeting between Davis and Whiting, and had made several bets with the other fellows as to whether Davis would show up.

"Whiting appeared punctually as usual, but though we waited until midnight, Davis failed to materialise. Of course this settled the matter in Whiting's mind for the time being, and he made us set up several bottles of wine to drink the health of his mythical counterpart, as he called him.

"The next night, however, he came to the club, and, drawing Robinson and me aside, said: 'Look here, this matter has gone too far. I like a joke, but I think it is rather rough for you to keep it up.' And on our expressing our ignorance of his meaning, he showed us a letter from Davis, regretting his inability to be present the night before, and saying that he was too ill at the moment to express his regrets in person.

"'But my dear fellow,' said Robinson, 'if you really think us guilty of this letter, will you kindly explain how it happens to be written on your own paper?'

"Whiting seized the note and seemed frightened for the moment, for at the head of the letter was his crest, and the envelope bore the impression of his private seal, which he always wore on his watch-chain. He looked at it searchingly, and then left the club without a word.

"After this occurrence we ceased bantering him about Davis, and passed the word around to the other fellows to drop it, for we saw that the matter worried him greatly, and feared the effect of our chaff on his high-strung, nervous temperament. Davis came to the club less frequently during the winter, but at every mention of Whiting's name he smiled, and said he was very sorry they did not happen to meet.

"One day, early in the spring, Whiting sent a note asking me to come up to his den after dinner, as he had something of importance to tell, and begged me not to fail him. I had often been to his consulting rooms, but had never visited him at his rooms in Perth Street.

"The house was one of a row of old-fashioned buildings still in good repair, but backed up against their rear were several ramshackle old tenements, nearly deserted by tenants.

"I had not seen Whiting for some months and was shocked by the change in his appearance. There were dark circles under his eyes and a strange, hunted expression in his face. He grasped my hand eagerly and drew a chair for me in front of the fire, for the evenings were still cool.

"'Doctor,' he exclaimed suddenly, after we had lit our cigars and talked glittering generalities for a few minutes, 'that fellow Davis is killing me by inches.'

"'Why, old man,' I said, 'so you have come to believe in him at last.' I started to laugh, but checked myself when I saw the expression of his face.

"'What is it, my dear boy?' I asked, soothingly. 'It certainly can't be so serious. What has he been up to now?'

"''Tis queer business,' said Whiting excitedly, 'and I can't imagine his motive; but these are the facts. For several weeks this fellow has dogged my footsteps, and after I have made a professional call and left the usual prescription he has sent a note to the patient imitating my handwriting and changing the medicines for others, which had they been taken as directed, would, in some cases, have proved fatal. Fortunately the chemists have sent word to me that there was some mistake and I have been able to correct it. But of course this constant changing of prescriptions has affected my practice terribly, and people are beginning to think that my mind is unbalanced.'

"'But, my dear fellow,' said I, trying to quiet him, 'why not give up your practice for a few weeks and take a decided rest, and meanwhile we will deal with this fellow Davis as he deserves.'

"'But that is not all,' continued Whiting, despairingly. 'It is true I don't need the income from my practice, and work more from the love of it than for fees, but he has gone still further and dared to call on Miss Wiley, my fiancée, and tell her many of the foolish escapades of my college days, the secret of which I thought was buried in my own breast. I have tried to explain them away, but, of course, cannot deny the tales, and I fear it is all over for me in that quarter. I can't see how she could listen to the cad or where she could have met him.'

"Davis's actions seemed to be more inexplicable than ever, and I longed to get hold of the brute and force an explanation from him; but, hiding my anger, I tried to quiet Whiting, and finally prevailed upon him to take a heavy dose of chloral, which I prepared,

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and to try and get a night's rest, promising to see Miss Wiley shortly and attempt to patch up matters.

"I left him asleep on his lounge, and, as it was still early, determined to call on Miss Wiley, whom I knew slightly, and tell her of Whiting's condition.

"There was a light in the drawing room, and, ringing the bell, I gave my card to the servant, but he ushered me in unannounced. Miss Wiley sat at the piano, her hands on the keys, while standing at her side and looking down ardently into her upturned face was—Davis.

"For a moment I could not speak and seemed glued to the floor, but Davis quickly advanced and, after a few polite inquiries about my health and his dear friend Whiting, pleaded an engagement and left.

"His presence in the house and his unmistakable lover-like attitude made it very painful for me to speak, but remembering the condition of poor Whiting and how heartbroken he seemed, I ventured to speak about Davis and asked where she had met him.

"'Oh, I have only known him a few weeks,' she said. 'He called with a letter of introduction from Dr. Whiting and said they had been fellow students. He has been most kind and attentive to me, and is teaching me some of his own songs.' And she rattled on about his divine voice, while I sat speechless at the new complication of affairs.

"At last I blurted out. 'Would you kindly let me see the letter of introduction?' adding that Dr. Whiting had promised me letters to some of his friends and I wished to see his methods.

"I felt that this was a most feeble excuse, but could think of nothing else, and of course Miss Wiley was too polite to express her surprise at the strange request. Going to a dainty writing desk in the corner she came back and handed me the letter.

"There was no doubt of the chirography being exactly similar to Whiting's. I saw the same old fashioned capitals and crisp, sharp endings of each word, and as for the signature, his bank would have sworn to it. Besides, there was his crest and seal which I now knew so well.

"I don't know what I said in thanking her, for my head was in a whirl, but I had enough sense to say good-night and quickly withdrew.

"How Davis could have obtained the paper and seal, or how he learnt of all those college scrapes of Whiting's I could not imagine. But I saw that his relations with Miss Wiley had gone so far that it would do no good for me to interfere, and that I should only be snubbed by her for my impertinence in meddling in other people's business.

"Whiting was out when I called at his rooms next morning, and his servant told me that he had gone to the country for a rest and left no address.

"It was perhaps a month afterwards that he turned up at the club one night, looking more ghastly than ever. He would not say where he had been, and positively declined to discuss the Davis matter.

"I know he talked widely about hypnotic control and kindred subjects until we thought his mind was affected, and tried to calm him; but he grew more and more excited, until, finally, I saw him turn pale and clutch the back of a chair, and noticed a little stream of frothy blood oozing from between his clenched teeth as he staggered out of the room.

"I jumped up from the sofa and followed as quickly as I could, but when I reached the front door he was gone and I met Davis just coming in.

"He walked leisurely into the café and leant against the mantelpiece. To my excited enquiries about Whiting he simply smiled and said he had not noticed him going out, but I saw him scratching a small red spot from his cuff with his finger nail and felt sure they must have met.

"'Gentlemen,' said Davis, in his drawling voice, 'I beg you will congratulate me on my approaching marriage, and pardon my not mentioning the lady's name in the club. Waiter, please take the orders.'

"Most of us refused to drink with him, for we despised the man, and I left him chatting with a few of his particular cronies and went up to Whiting's room. I heard that Davis left very shortly after I did.

"Whiting had not come home and I spent the night hunting through hotels, police stations and hospital, for I felt sure he had ruptured a bloodvessel in his lungs, which must quickly prove fatal.

"But I could find no trace of him, and finally, utterly worn out, went to my rooms to toss about until mid-day with a horrible nightmare, in which Whiting and Davis were struggling in one another's grasp, each striving to kill the other.

"At lunch I picked up a morning paper and scanned the society news listlessly until my eyes lit upon 'the rumoured engagement of Dr. J. H. Davis of — and Miss Isabelle Wiley, the well-known belle, etc.'

"I sat musing over the strange vicissitudes of fate and wondering what had become of poor Whiting. Suddenly a news-boy rushed into the restaurant calling extras, and the first headline I saw was:

"'Sudden death of Dr. Davis.'

"I eagerly read the usual detailed account of how he had been found that morning dead in his bed, evidently, the paper stated, from a ruptured blood vessel, as the bed clothing and carpets were stained with blood, but no wound was found on his body.

"Strangely enough, he lived in one of the old tenements at the back of Whiting's home, and measurements which I made subsequently showed that his rooms and Whiting's must have been on similar floors and directly back to back.

"Remembering the stolen notepaper I tried to find some entrance between the two houses, but the walls were solid, and even the wall papers showed naught but the few little cracks due to their many years' service.

"This, gentlemen," said Dr. Forrest, draining his glass and taking up his hat and cane from the sofa, "is a story of actual life, and if any of you have an explanation to offer I should be happy to hear it."

We could say nothing for a moment, and then the irrepressible Merton found his tongue.

"But how about Dr. Whiting?" he asked.

"As for him, gentlemen," said Dr. Forrest, solemnly, as he stood by the open door, "I know nothing further except that he was never found. But I have my theory. Good night!"

And he closed the door.

A. W. Worth.

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HESTER'S LOVE.

WHEN pretty Hester Warren married Ezra Banks, who was twenty years older than she, and a shy, silent man out of touch with village life, everybody said that she made a mistake that she would soon regret. Yet, though village eyes kept keenest watch upon them, village prophecy was for once at fault. Hester's girlish beauty changed into comfortable, middle-aged comeliness, and Ezra grew stiff and rheumatic, yet their devotion to each other was unchanged; indeed, after Nannie, their only child, married and left home, it seemed as if the pages of life had blown back for them and they were once more lovers, and the world was for them alone.

That was before Ezra had typhoid fever. Through his long illness his wife nursed him tenderly, but he came from it, a broken-down old man, with his ears forever sealed to all the common sounds to which his life had been set. He was slow in realising this, but one day as he lay watching his wife and the doctor, the knowledge broke harshly upon him. He could see his wife's lips move as she smoothed the bed with her soft, wrinkled hand, but he could hear no word. Then he turned his dull eyes, with a pitiful look of pain darkening them, toward the doctor. He too, was speaking, but the deaf ears could catch no sound. His weak, peevish voice jarred suddenly upon their talk.

"Why don't ye speak so's I can hear ye, stid o' mumbling so?"

His wife started and then cast a quick, imploring glance at the doctor. She leaned down over the bed her face was in the shadow and her husband could not see her eyes.

"Do you hear me now, dear?"

The words reached him faintly, and from a distance. He struggled with the sounds a minute or two before they resolved themselves into words.

"Of course I hear ye," he said fretfully, "only why don't you speak up? I ain't so sick, be I?"

The words were a little clearer now, though still far off.

"You have been very ill. It has to be quiet for you you know, dear, but you will soon be up now."

The old man shut his eyes wearily; the effort had been a heavy one for him. His wife turned to the doctor, her eyes shining through her tears.

"I can make him hear," she cried; "I knew I could. I didn't believe Ezra could get where he couldn't hear me. And he needn't ever know now."

The doctor looked at her and said nothing. He was a young man, and it seemed very pitiful to him.

But he had not understood the old man's strong constitution. In a few weeks he was about again, as well as ever, apparently, save for the sealed ears. His wife chattered to him in her old fashion, and kept out of sight the medicines she took for her strained voice; she cautioned the neighbours who came to see him, and thought that he did not know. But she was mistaken; there were other sounds—many of them—that had been woven into a life of nearly seventy years, and in place of these there was a great vacant stillness; and he knew all.

One afternoon she found him sitting in the big wooded chair in the kitchen, studying his old twisted hands. He gave her a tremulous smile as she came in.

"I'm most broken up, Hester," he said.

"Don't!" she cried, "don't Ezra!—I can't bear it! We're both getting older, but that's all 'tis."

He shook his head sadly.

"No, 'tain't, Hester—I've been a-seeing it for a long time. You're young yet—you can see and hear just as you uster, but I—I'm an old man, Hester. You've been a good girl, and we've had a happy life together, but I didn't calculate for you to be tied up to an old man. I've got to thinking about it lately, and sometimes I think folks was right and it hadn't orter been."

The woman listened and a great pain seemed to beat up in her throat and choke her voice. She leaned over and put her trembling hands on his.

"Ezra," she cried, and the appeal in her voice carried it with clear distinctness to him, "Ezra, have I ever said or done a thing to make you feel so?"

He looked up, startled.

"Heaven knows you haven't Hester," he said earnestly.

"And, Ezra, if anything should happen to me—if I should be sick or helpless, would you love me less? Would you?"

A change came over the old man; it seemed for an instant that the face of his youth looked back at her.

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"If it wasn't for your suffering, Hester, I wish you could see," he said almost passionately.

He rose stiffly, and stood with his arm about her, looking down the road. It was toward nightfall, and the valley was full of shadows, while above the hills floated soft grey clouds—the dead sunset. And even as they looked a sudden thrill and flush came across these, and the valley was filled with the glory of the after-glow, and the two old figures stood silent in the midst of the golden light.

It was a few weeks after this that Hester caught a severe cold. She was in bed for several days, and Nannie had her husband and child to care for, and her mother would not let her stay long.

"They'll be needing you—I can get along now," she said.

"I expect they can get along without me a little while longer," answered Nannie.

"What do you say?"

Nannie looked alarmed; she raised her voice and spoke with careful emphasis:

"I expect—they can get along—without me a little while," she repeated.

Her mother nodded.

"I said it had been quite a while," she said. "I'm glad you're going, Nannie, though we shall miss you so."

Nannie's face filled with a pitiful tenderness.

Her mother looked up suddenly and noticed, and a strange expression came into her eyes. She spoke with curious eagerness.

"Nannie," she said, "tell me true, don't I hear as I used to?"

Nannie's face flushed. With a sudden impulsive gesture she threw her arms about her mother, sobbing bitterly. But in her mother's eyes the strange expression grew into a glad light.

"Don't feel so, Nannie," she said. "I—I'm almost glad I'm going to tell your father."

Nannie went home the next day sorely against her will. She told her husband that it almost broke her heart to think of them so; if it wasn't for little Nannie she would go back there and stay, but she couldn't take the child—it might hurt her throat seriously to have to shout to them. Then she caught Nannie up and kissed her again and again; she wondered how she could live if she couldn't hear that baby voice. She was troubled too, for the child had a delicate throat and she dared not take her often to see the old folks—and they would miss her so!

But it was not so hard; her mother spoke of it herself, and said that she and father had talked it over, and they knew it would be best not to have the child there often. And Nannie mustn't worry—they could get along all right as long as they could hear each other. Indeed, it seemed as if the bond of suffering drew them closer together. It was beautiful to see the old man's care for his wife, and the tenderness in speaking to her. The neighbours who had pitied at first talked often of it; they said they never saw two deaf people take such comfort in each other. Often on summer days the two high-pitched voices would be heard, and the people passing would smile at each other, and sometimes linger a little.

So the winter passed and the summer, and then quite suddenly, one night when the earth was lying hushed and silent under a soft fall of snow, the old man passed from the silence of his life into the silence that is beyond the reach of human voice.

The neighbours for miles around came to the funeral and the house was full of grave decorous whispers, broken strangely when any one spoke to the wife. She was pale and silent; only once did she speak of anything that she wanted done, and then she called Nannie hesitatingly.

"Tell him I don't want him to speak so's I can hear. It—it wouldn't seem proper, somehow. It won't make any difference to Ezra now,"—she faltered a moment, and a tender light came into the faded blue eyes—"he can't say anything about my husband that I don't know a hundred times better than him."

"I'll tell him, mother," said Nannie, gently.

Her mother spoke slowly, choosing her words. "And tell him," she said, "that we've lived together thirty years, and it don't seem more than thirty weeks as I look back. And tell him that in it all was never an angry word, never anything but a love I can speak of; and tell him" (she was crying a little now, but her face was still touched with the wonderful light) "tell him that the only thing I'm sorry for now is that there wasn't more I could do to show my love for my husband."

"I will tell him all," said Nannie.

That was a strange funeral—the neighbours spoke of it afterwards. The still figure that sat dead to the words of tender healing spoken by the minister seemed to lend an element of mystery to the scene, and the contrast between the darkened room and the brilliant, sparkling world outside flashed upon their eyes like a miracle.

When the old man was laid to his last rest, the lonely widow quietly turned away from the grave, and was assisted into the carriage of her daughter and son-in-law and driven to their home. She was so quiet that her daughter did not disturb her.

"I don't feel as if I knew what to say to her, though she is my mother," she whispered to her husband.

They helped her tenderly into the house and Nannie put her into the easiest chair. From the next room a baby voice broke in upon them.

"Mamma, can I see dran'ma? Nannie wants to see dran'ma!"

"Let me have Nannie, please—it's so long since I have!"

Nannie stopped at the door, a great wonder in her eyes.

"Why, mother!" she exclaimed.

Her mother looked up at her with a tremulous smile.

"Yes, I know. I meant to tell you before, but I couldn't somehow and I've heard all the time; I was only deaf a day or two from cold. I thought I really was at first, and then I kept it up, because it comforted—him—somehow. He'd felt he was old and breaking down, you know, but when I did, too, he felt better and cheered right up. There was only one thing—I did want the baby so! And it seemed as if 'twould break my heart when she did come not to answer her and to have her strain her little voice to make me hear!"

"And you kept it up all these months!" said Nannie in hushed tone.

Her mother looked up; she was holding little Nannie with eager, trembling hands, and it almost seemed as if the golden baby head reflected a wonderful light upon her tired face.

"When you've loved a man more than thirty years, that isn't much to do," she replied.

Wm. Bryant.

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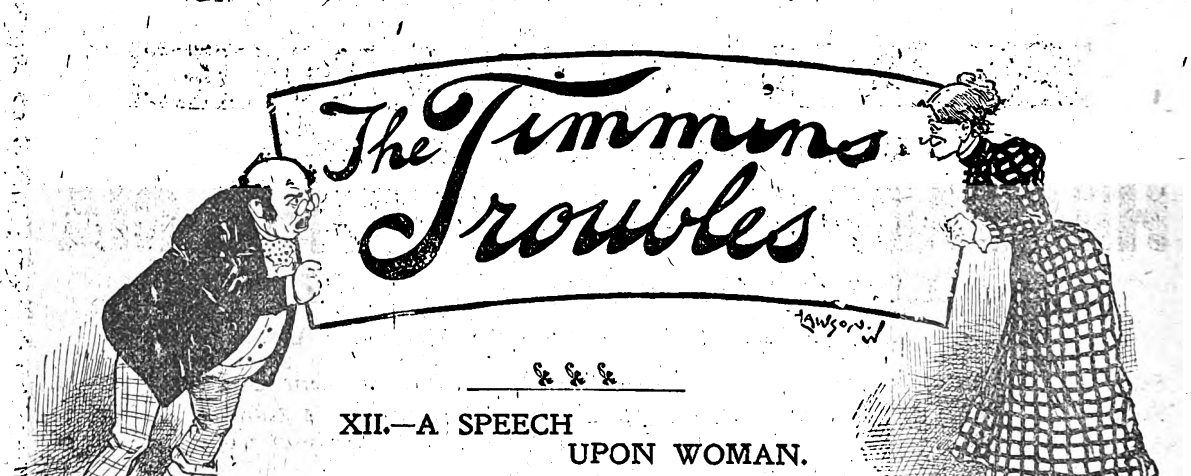

XII.—A SPEECH UPON WOMAN.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, as he drew writing materials towards him, "now I want your woman's wit. These fellows insist that I must respond to the toast 'Woman,' to-morrow night, and I must prepare a few remarks. If we both set at it, we'll get up something nice."

"What you want," argued Mrs. Timmins, entering into the spirit of the undertaking, and tapping her teeth with her thimble, "what you want is woman in her various phases."

"What I want is a speech," retorted Mr. Timmins. "They haven't put me down for a panorama. I want a short address, full of good points and pleasant things about the ladies. Now I shall begin. 'Fellow citizens ——'"

"But women are not fellow citizens, you know. I should say——"

"You'd say, 'Fellow back-hair,' that's what you would say. I'm addressing the people, and they're all men; don't you see? I've got to commence somewhere, and then I go on. 'Now, fellow citizens, regarding women, our sir girl, our companions, our posterity, our mothers, our wives, our daughters, what more can we say than that they give us life, make it happy, and soothe its decline?' How's that?"

"Is that the same woman?" asked Mrs. Timmins, bending over the table. "It doesn't strike me that she would care to have it put in that way. Why not say, 'Fellow-citizens, we are assemb——'"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "I've got to open with a sentiment, and you can't find anything more graceful than that. Then I will go on: 'She rises in the cradle, reaches her meridian at the altar, and goes down in a flood of dew at the grave.' Can you grasp that?"

"I don't like that as well as the other," remonstrated Mrs. Timmins. "You make her a mother while she's a baby, and as for the grave part, you don't stop to think that she may be another meridian by getting married again. I would say something like this, 'Fellow-citizens, we are assemb——'"

"No, I won't either. Who's going to get married again? Can't you see that I'm only carrying out the first idea of origin, companionship, and posterity? Suppose I say next, 'We revere her as a mother, adore her as a wife, and—and'—what do we do for her as a daughter?"

"Well, you might say, we dress her, we educate her, and keep an eye on her, and—and—and—"

"Spank her! Why don't you spank her?" howled Mr. Timmins. "Can't you think of something practical? I've got that we revere our mothers and adore our wives, and I want something for the daughter. Can't you originate something?"

"We provide a home for her. Wouldn't——?"

"Yes, of course!" raved Mr. Timmins. "That's the ideal! That settles it! All you want now is two 'prolonged laughters,' four 'continued applauses,' one 'enthusiasm,' and 'a voice,' to be an oration! 'Fellow-citizens, we furnish her with poached eggs and beans! Fellow-citizens, we revere her as a mother, we adore her as a wife, and as a daughter, we change the sheets once a week! Fellow-citizens, we pass her the gravy!'

"'Fellow-citizens!' yelled Mr. Timmins, gesticulating like a horse chestnut tree, 'Fellow-citizens, if she wants her beef underdone, we give it to her. Fellow-citizens, we give her all the butter she can paste on her bread!' Is that what you want me to say? Have you got any more suggestions? Do you know any more eloquence?" And the worthy gentleman leant back in his chair speechless.

"Couldn't you leave her out altogether?" recommended Mrs. Timmins. "Can't you just revere her as a mother and adore her as a wife? As for the daughter, you might pass it over with saying: 'Fellow-citizens, we are assem——'"

"Yes, or I can cut her throat," exclaimed Mr. Timmins. "I can take her to the pound! I can salt her down for winter use! Hang the speech!" and Mr. Timmins danced on the fragments of his notes, and banged himself out of the room.

"Well," thought Mrs. Timmins, as she took down her hair and put it up again, "I don't see why he couldn't say: 'Fellow-citizens, we are assembled here to say something poetical about woman, and the best I can say is, we don't always show her when we love her, and we love her when we don't always show it.' That's sensible, and it's so," sighed Mrs. Timmins.

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V. D. L. writes to ask if I can tell him when is a man serving in the Army entitled to a pension.————A man is entitled to receive a pension for life varying from 1s. 1d. to 2s. 9d. a day after twenty-one years of service. If a warrant officer, he should receive from three to five shillings a day.

David.—Your friend has informed you correctly; there is an annual Welsh service in St. Paul's Cathedral—that is, the service is conducted wholly in the language of the Principality. This takes place on the eve of St. David's Day. It is also true that the medical fraternity have a special service, late in the summer, at the Cathedral, in which Latin plays an important part.

Wood.—There is a considerable difference, from the point of view of shipbuilders and others, in wood cut in winter from that cut in summer. During the period of rest—from October to April, roughly speaking—the wood is filled with starchy matter, and if the trees are cut down during this interval it is much firmer. Experts always choose winter-cut timber.

S. B.—In former times it was common to build chapels on bridges at the entrance of towns and villages. One of the best existing specimens of such edifices is that on the bridge across the Don, at Rotherham, in Yorkshire; it was built in 1383. It is mentioned in the works of John Leyland, the antiquary, who died in 1553.

J. H. H.—The Albert Medal was instituted in 1866 for the purpose of rewarding acts of heroism performed by civilians either on land or at sea.

F. I. B.—There are several branches of the Bank of England. In London alone, besides the head office, there are two branch offices. There are also branches in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Hull, Bristol, Newcastle, Plymouth, and Portsmouth.

F. L.—A Belgian illustrated paper was recently produced in a novel manner. Owing to a strike of compositors, there was no one to set up the few lines of descriptive matter required for a certain issue, and it looked as though the paper would not appear at the regular time. But the editor was a man of resource. He had the matter typewritten, and this and the sketches were arranged on cardboard, sheet by sheet. The sixteen sheets were reproduced by photography on zinc and etched in the usual manner, the size of the sheets being reduced somewhat so that all the matter could be printed on pages of the regular size of the journal. That issue had a large sale.

One.—Surnames and names of places consisting of one letter only, are to be found in several foreign countries. The Chinese General I distinguished himself in the war with Japan. There is a family in Belgium with the name of O, descendants of a French marquis. In the Department of the Somme, France, there is a village Y, and a bay in the Zuyder Zee has the same name. In Sweden there is a village called U.

V. G.—No, the wife of an Archbishop and the members of his family bear no title as such.

K. G. asks: "Has a negro ever been knighted by the Queen? I know that certain celebrated Indian gentlemen have been so honoured, but I mean a coal-black negro."————Yes. Sir Samuel Lewis, first mayor of Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone was knighted by Her Majesty. He is a distinguished gentleman, a barrister of the Middle Temple, London, and Chief Justice of the Colony.

Parliamentarian.—All public Acts affecting the United Kingdom, and all local Acts affecting only limited areas, as well as private Acts of Parliament, are published, and may be obtained from Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, East Harding Street, London, E.C.

Miss G.—Some of the principal clubs for ladies in London are the Alexandra, in Grosvenor Street; the Denison, Buckingham Street; Adelphi; the Somerville, in Oxford Street; and the Pioneer, in Bruton Street, W.

A. B. G.—The Corps of Commissionaires was founded about forty years ago for the purpose of employing retired soldiers and sailors of Her Majesty's regular forces. You are quite right in the belief that the institution was originally intended only for men who had received wounds in the Crimea and Indian Mutiny. This regulation was not enforced for long, however, as the demand for the services of commissionaires rapidly increased.

Ambitious would like to know if there are any qualifications of property necessary to become a member of Parliament.————None whatever. Any male of full age, with the exception of English and Scotch peers, judges, clergy of the Established Church, and a few others, may be elected to sit in the House of Commons.

Q.—Just three years ago, there was an instance of father and son, both soldiers, being decorated by the Queen on the same day for distinguished service. Major-General Low, who commanded the Chitral Relief Force, and his son, Lieutenant Low, who acted as aide-de-camp, went to Windsor together; the former received a G. C. B. and the latter the Distinguished Service Order.

T. G.—Bank Holidays were unheard-of luxuries until the year 1871, when Sir John Lubbock brought in a Bill declaring that certain days of the year, namely, Easter Monday, Whit Monday, First Monday in August, and Boxing Day should be kept as public holidays.

R. N.—Your friend is altogether wrong. The total tonnage of steamships and sailing vessels owned by the United Kingdom and her colonies is more than a half of the world's grand shipping total. Britain and her colonies own 11,143 steamers and sailing vessels, with a tonnage of 13,665,312, whilst the total tonnage of all countries in the world is 26,561,250 tons, distributed among 28,052 vessels. The United States of America are second on the list, with 3,150 vessels of 2,448,677 tons. Germany is a somewhat poor third, France fourth, and Russia a very bad fifth, only having 1,159 vessels of 594,434 tons.

W. E.—When a man talks of "drawing his salary," it amounts to saying that he is receiving his salt-money, for the word "salary" comes from the Latin *sal*, "salt." Roman officials, when absent from home on duty, received a limited sum, nominally intended to cover the cost of salt—regarded as a necessary part of one's food; but the money so paid was really to defray travelling expenses. It is said that it was this custom that gave rise to the expression "not worth his salt"; but it is difficult to ascertain the exact origin of the saying.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 532. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 11TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 532. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending March 11th, 1899.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

Jean Barlow's Story.

"EXTRA special!" The words were bawled in my ear as I was hurrying into Charing Cross Station with just three minutes to spare before the train for Wrexley started.

Still, I wanted an evening paper, so seized one, fumbled for and found a copper, then dashed on to the platform and jumped into my train, only just in time, as it began to move a minute afterwards.

The compartment was "3rd class," and there was one other occupant, a man.

I began to read my paper. I had been staying in Scotland, in the extreme north, for a fortnight, where news got stale before it reached me, so I quite enjoyed the knowledge that I held in my hands the *latest* news of the day. I glanced over the "House" column, read the Foreign intelligence, skimmed a "leader,"—then—the name of my own village caught my eye—it was in a heading:

"Dreadful murder at Wrexley," and the paragraph below ran as follows:

The list of murderers, men and women is, alas! a long one, but in this instance the case is peculiarly shocking, as the accused, by name Jean Barlow, is only aged eighteen.

It appears that, on Sunday the 8th, James Brown, carter, was found lying dead in a lane near Wrexley. There were signs of violence on his body, but death had been caused by a heavy blow from some instrument which had such force as to kill him instantaneously. The police were very much puzzled at first, but afterwards, a heavy, knobbed stick with a leaden top was found close to the scene of the murder.

Beside the murdered man stood Jean Barlow (now in custody).

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Her limbs had evidently become partially paralysed with terror and had refused to carry her from the spot where lay the victim of her crime.

When she was taken into custody, the girl said nothing, when questioned, refused to answer—and we are informed that no word of any kind has passed her lips since she was found standing beside the dead man clutching (of all things!) a prayer-book.

Inside this book, on the fly-leaf was written: "To my sweetheart Jean from Jack Reynolds."

The book gives no clue, as it belongs to Jean Barlow herself, and she was engaged to the above-mentioned Jack Reynolds. The only difficulty is, how could a girl (slender and of medium height as she is described to be) attack and kill a big man.

The police answer this, by saying that James Brown was *struck from behind*—and that the marks on his body may have been the results of some other fight, as James Brown was rather addicted to pugilistic exercise.

The stick which had been found belonged (so four different witnesses allege) to Jean Barlow's father, long since dead. So far, the evidence seems very much against the opinion held by a small number of persons, namely that Jean Barlow was not the criminal.

However, in a day or two, there will doubtless be further developments.

As I came to the end of this paragraph, the paper dropped from my hand.

"Little Jean Barlow! Good Heavens! Our old gardener's orphan daughter! Impossible!"

So ran my thoughts.

I turned away from the passing landscape which seemed at that moment only a series of blurred, meaningless views—and noticed that the man who sat opposite me was regarding me fixedly.

"I dare say you have seen the case of Jean Barlow?" he queried; "no wonder you are shocked! It is a terrible thing that one so young——"

"It is an infernal lie," I said hotly. "Jean Barlow lives in my own village, at Wrexley, and a sweeter, more gentle, more womanly woman never lived!"

"*Hum*," said the stranger; "such assertions won't count for much in the evidence, I don't think."

There was a covert sneer in his voice which I strongly resented.

"What interest have you in the matter?" I asked sharply.

"None very special," he said calmly; "only I happen to be her brother."

"Merciful Providence!" I ejaculated. "Her *brother*! Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself for even suspecting her to be capable of such a deed!"

"Ought I?" he asked lightly.

"Time will show. Opinions differ; I stick to my own."

"It is a false one," I said violently.

"Perhaps so," he returned in a slow, drawling voice, enough to exasperate anyone in itself.

"As you have put the question to me," he said, "I suppose I have an equal right to ask *you* why you take such an interest in this case?"

"Certainly," I said shortly. "Jean Barlow's mother was a very faithful servant to my mother, and we have always taken a deep interest in her children, left orphans at a very early age—I presume that you are the half-brother of whom I have sometimes heard Jean speak, the son of Barlow's first wife?"

"Just so—and I am now on my way to Wrexley to investigate this matter—I suppose I am speaking to the young Squire—to Mr. Lynton?"

"That is my name," I told him, "and I am glad to hear that you are going to 'investigate' things at Wrexley, for I am one of those people who believe that 'truth will out,' and so, in your 'investigations' you will probably find that Jean is not guilty."

To my surprise, the man Barlow suddenly held out his hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Lynton," he said in a moved voice (how different from his former tone I can hardly describe). "Thank you, in Jean's name and my own. It is true I am only her half-brother, but I love the child—I was only trying you, to see on whose side you were—I have an intimate conviction that you are worthy of trust (Heaven grant that I am right!)—and so I am going to confide in you, a thing I rarely do to anyone—man or woman.

"But in this case you may be able to help me, as your father is a man 'having authority' where prisons are concerned, and I may require some 'red-tape' in the way of permissions in my work.

"I must first tell you that I am a detective by profession and my chief has given me this task *as a special favour!* (The irony of Life!)—He noticed the coincidence of my name being the same as 'the accused' with a smile and a joke, for he has not the least idea that 'Jean Barlow' and 'Paul Barlow detective' are in any way connected, and I thought it better not to mention that fact. I am now going to Wrexley, to see if I can extract any information from those dunderheads the Fellings (cousins to Jean) who were always hanging about the cottage where she lived with old Aunt Maggie (you know them sir?)."

"Yes, I do," I replied, "and I can tell you something else, and that is that Jack Reynolds, Jean's *fiancé*, is the best fellow who ever stepped, and that James Brown (a disappointed suitor) was furiously jealous, and would have given worlds to have stood in the other man's shoes."

"Ah!" said Barlow thoughtfully, "that is something to know. Jean didn't tell me these things. She is a shy lassie, and was doubtless afraid of being teased. Have those two ever had words?"

"Often," I said, "to Jean's extreme discomfort—but she patched up a kind of truce between them the very day before James Brown was murdered. I was at home, I remember, some weeks back, and she passed me in a lane—I stopped and talked to her for a while, and asked her how she kept the turbulent pair in order! My mother and I were laughing about it afterwards, and the other day she wrote to me (her letter was dated Saturday the 7th), and she told me, amongst other items of local news and gossip:

"'I have just seen pretty Jean Barlow; she tells me that she has bound James Brown by a bribe to keep the peace and that she felt like a bone between two dogs! I tell you this as I know how amused you have been over this village comedy!'"

"Did she tell you what that bribe was?" Barlow queried.

I shook my head.

"That is a pity," he remarked, "because (you mark my words, sir) that bribe was the cause, I don't doubt, of a fresh quarrel. The murder took place on a Sunday—the *quarrel was over a prayer-book.*"

I gasped. "Over a *prayer-book!*" I repeated. "But it was *Jean's* prayer-book, given her by Jack Reynolds."

"Precisely. Had it been anybody else's prayer-book it wouldn't have been any clue in this instance."

"I give it up," I said. "I'm not a detective. But, one thing I do beg of you, and that is, that you will come and tell me of any further developments, and, if I can be of any use, I hope you know that you can rely upon me."

"I will certainly, and thank you, sir, very much. I have a plan in my head," he added, "and if I can't find

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out anything at Wrexley, I am going to try and see Jean in prison—there is where I shall want your help."

"And then?" I asked him.

"I will do a thing which goes sorely against the grain with me," Barlow said slowly, "but her life hangs in the balance, and it is a life which is a very precious one to me. My plan is this: To get Jean to confide in me—by promising secrecy—with a mental reservation to the effect that such a promise shall not be kept (unless her confession implicates herself, which Heaven forbid!)."

I shifted uncomfortably in my corner.

"It's an awfully underhand way of proceeding," I grumbled.

"Tell me a better plan," he said sharply, "and I will undertake to carry it out." At which I was silent.

After all, I thought, detectives' work is never above board, it can't be, or in nine cases out of ten, criminals would escape the law—so——"Do as you think best," I said resignedly.

Just then the train stopped at a small station. In got a woman and a boy.

The woman had an evening paper in her hand, and was very red in the face.

"The h'dea!" she said, "of hour Jean a-doin' such a thing!" (addressing the boy indignantly). "She who's 'ardly strong enough to do the 'ouse-work up at Maggie's, let alone knock big hulking fellows down like James Brown! The perlice 'ave just gone stark staring mad, that's wot it is doin'."

"I s'pects so," was Tom's laconic reply. He was evidently too sleepy to pay much attention.

I looked at Barlow.

"What she says is only common-sense," I said in a low voice.

"Of course," was his answer. "But time will show."

* * * * *

Paul Barlow is interviewing his sister in the prison to-day. So much I know, having obtained the order for him to see her. Afterwards he is to come and tell me with what results.

* * * * *

"Mr. Lionel to see you, sir," announced the butler.

By some intuition I knew that "Mr. Lionel" was Paul Barlow.

"Show him in here," I said (I was in my own "den"), "and Bennett——"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't wish to be disturbed while he is here."

"Very good, sir."

And Bennett departed to return presently and usher in Barlow.

We shook hands, but I waited until the door was shut to ask eagerly:

"Well, what news?"

Barlow's face was very white.

"Jean did not do it—I need hardly say that to you—but she knows who *did* and will not say."

"She will not say!" I exclaimed.

"Then it can be only one person——"

"A girl will not lightly contemplate hanging—unless for somebody's sake who is, to her, dearer than life."

"You are right—the man who did the deed can be no other than Jack Reynolds," Barlow said quickly; "but we have no data to go on—though I have constructed a theory of my own.

"It is this, that Jean gave, or rather lent her prayer-book—(the one given her by Jack Reynolds)—to James Brown, on condition of 'keeping the peace'—(you know what trifles are prized by men in love)—James Brown took it, but broke his word and flourished it in his rival's face on Sunday, when they met in that quiet lane where the murdered man was found. Jean doubtless snatched it from his hands.

"Jack began to upbraid her with being false to him—(you know how reason goes with men in love!)—James lost his temper and struck him—a fight ensued, and at last, Jack Reynolds picked up 'old' Barlow's (my father's) stick, and having grasped it by the wrong end, dealt James Brown that fatal blow.

"The stick was a queer-looking thing, just the kind to take a young man's fancy, and so, probably, Jean had given it to him.

"Seeing what he had done, Jack Reynolds took to flight, leaving Jean standing there, paralysed with fear horror and fright."

"Your theory is a very ingenious explanation of the mystery," I said, "but—I wish you could fit your saddle to some other horse. Do you think Jean will thank you for taking the rope from round her neck to fix it round that of her lover?"

"Bah," said Paul Barlow. "She can get another soon enough."

But I could see he did not mean what he said.

"You don't know women," was all I said.

"And do you profess to be a judge?" he asked smiling.

"No," I said quietly, "but it would take a cleverer man than either you or I, Barlow, to guage the height and the depth of a good woman's love and devotion."

His keen eyes softened.

"She is a good woman if there ever was one. The steadfast look in her eyes I can never for get when she said to me:

"'Don't fret about me Paul. We are all in God's hands. He who takes note of a humble sparrow falling to the ground, will not desert me in my hour of need. I have absolutely no fear—I trust in Him so utterly.'

"They were her last words to me—I wish I had her faith."

"I wish you had," I said gravely. "It is a gift we cannot value too highly."

After some more talk, Paul Barlow went away, and I did not see him again until the day of Jean's trial.

* * * * *

The Court was crowded.

The case promised to be one of great interest.

I made a point of being there.

I was painfully anxious to hear the trial to the end—above all, the verdict. I could see Jean's face clearly.

She was very pale—but her big blue eyes shone with so calm and steadfast a light that, to look at her, gave me a curious feeling of awe. The case proceeded.

As one witness after another was called up and gave their evidence, I could see plainly that it was all going dead against the prisoner.

Already, I seemed to see the judge putting on his black cap, already seemed to hear the ominous words which pronounce the murderer's sentence: "that she would be hanged by the neck till she be dead."

At last it drew towards its close—the judge was preparing to address the Jury before they retired, to issue forth presently with the words "Guilty," or "Not Guilty"—words on which a life depended—when suddenly, there was a disturbance in the outer court.

"Let me pass!" a shrill voice cried, and presently a tall thin old woman was led in by a policeman.

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"She says she has important evidence to give, my Lord, bearing on this case," was his brief, business-like announcement.

The old woman was conducted to the witness-box, and duly swore in to speak "the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth."

There was perfect silence in the crowded court, unbroken even by the voice of the new witness for a moment.

She looked round.

Presently her eyes fell on Jean, standing pale but steadfast against the prisoner's bar.

"She is not guilty," the new witness said. "And, had I known that any human creature had been blamed for James Brown's murder she would not be standing there now. The murderer of James Brown,—sir,—was——"

She paused, and the pause was breathless—"Henry Webber, my idiot son."

A great murmering of relief, excitement, and what not, passed through the crowd like a wave, then there was once more silence, and the poor mother resumed her narrative. "On Sunday, the 8th, my son Henry was very restless, he went down to Maggie Barlow's cottage and stole a stick there which used to belong to Jean's father. He told me that he had taken it, because he wished to kill James Brown who had mocked him the day before, being silly with too much drink, I paid no heed to his words, he being weak in his head and for ever talking nonsense. But, on coming home from morning service, I heard sounds of fighting, and going into the lane from where those sounds came, I was just in time to see my boy, in a fit of mad fury, strike the blow which gave James Brown his death.

"I hurried forward, seized Henry by the arm, flung the stick away and led him home. Next morning, all remembrance of the scene had vanished from his brain. (He is weak in his head, sir, as I said before.)

"And I—how could I tell?—put the rope round the neck of my own son! So I took him away to a little place where I have a brother farming, intending to keep quiet until this had all blown over. But, yesterday, a newspaper arrived, it had been used to wrap a piece of bacon in—I smoothed it out to read it, and came upon the account of Jean's trial—and how, it was more than likely she'd be hanged. Sir—I could not, even to save my boy, allow so great a wrong. I have no more to say."

From my corner, I was watching Jean's sweet face, and I saw her expression change from relief to gladness, from gladness to surprise, then, her hands were clasped, and I knew, without words, that she was thanking God for having so rewarded her trust.

The Judge spoke gently to the witness. "The crimes of those afflicted with insanity," he said, "are not treated like those who are in full possession of their minds. Your son is no longer in a fit state to be at large. His case must be looked into by the doctors—and, if it is proved that he is of unsound mind, he will be placed under confinement. This is only just and necessary."

He said no more, and Mrs. Webber came out of the witness-box crying.

My heart bled for her—I knew her well. She was the wife of the village attorney, a highly respectable, superior woman.

At last, all was over—and Jean, our little Jean, was free. She herself, when somewhat recovered from all she had gone through, gave me an account of her behaviour, and of the awful fears she had entertained.

It appeared that the "bribe" she had given James Brown was the loan of her prayer-book. He had promised her jokingly "to come to Church and forgive his enemies" if she acceded to his request, which was the loan of the afore-mentioned book.

She had barely got home from the morning service, when one of her cousins ran into her calling out:

"Run Jean, run, Jem Brown and Jack have come to blows."

The boy has since confessed that he only did this to get a "rise" out of her.

Jean ran—retracing her steps towards the Church, and found James Brown lying dead beside the ditch—her prayer-book lying close by.

She picked it up mechanically and was still standing, rooted to the spot with horror, when two mounted police happened to ride by.

The rest of the story is known—except that Jean, when she heard about the leaden-topped stick, made up her mind that it was Jack Reynolds who had done the deed. He had admired the stick the day before, and she had told him he should have it for his own if he would come to fetch it on Sunday.

Seeing it gone from its accustomed place on her return from Church, she concluded that he had been in to fetch it, and wondered why he had not waited to see her when she came home from church as he usually did. Then came the foolish boy's fib—which roused her worst fears—and, when she found James Brown lying dead, she made up her mind that Jack Reynolds, in a fit of passion, had killed him.

So that her feelings of surprise, relief, and gladness, on hearing that the murder was done by Mrs. Webber's idiot son, can hardly be described.

Before that, she had fully made up her mind to bear the full brunt of the accusation until the end, even it she had to lay down her life to save Jack Reynolds.

"Jean is *more* than a woman!" I ejaculated, admiringly. But Paul Barlow shook his head.

"She is *only* a woman," he affirmed, "but a woman of the stamp men love and honour still when their beauty fades and old age robs them of outward charms, a woman who is not ashamed to exercise a woman's highest privilege"

"And that is?" I queried.

"To love," he answered, "and love divinely."

So I will end, having no more to say, but I had to write down what I knew of Jean Barlow's story.

Constance Craigie Halkett.

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- A PRIZE OF -

£1,000 FOR A "S.S." READER.

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TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtained this copy of "S.S." to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

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As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for the boys, and £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....

Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk * .....

.....

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THIS PRIZE IS OFFERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," AND "PASTIMES."

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OUR ATTENTIVE WAITER.

In the first place, I wish it distinctly understood that my hair is *not* red.

Flo insists that it is, and takes a wicked delight in calling me "Carrots" whenever there is anyone to hear her. But when a girl has verses made in honour of her locks which describes them as:

Ambrosial masses, bronze-hued in the shade,
But burning with the glimmer of deal gold where sunlight falls,

I think she is fully justified in calling her hair *auburn*, and in defending it against sarcastic attacks.

Yet, after she has passed thirty by several years, I presume that such vanities become ridiculous; they should be laid away somewhere, in a little box, with the fan and faded roses of her first ball and other cherished mementoes of her past girlhood, to be taken out and looked over only in secret, on a rainy afternoon, when she is in the mood for memories—and tears.

It was five years ago that Flo and I did Switzerland, with Aunt Mary for chaperon, and when sight-seeing had been pushed to the utmost limit of human endurance Aunt Mary gave out, and said she must go and rest for a time where there were no mountains that must be climbed and no mules to be ridden.

So we settled upon Interlaken, and decided to make it our headquarters for a fortnight's stay.

The evening we arrived it poured in torrents, and when we reached the landing at Interlaken we made a rush for the first omnibus that looked inviting and were driven at once to the Hotel de l'Imperatrice Victoria.

It was half-past nine next morning before we were ready for *petit déjeuner*, served in the dining-room, where we were almost the only guests, the others having started on their rounds.

We therefore monopolised the entire attention of our waiter, and as he moved noiselessly about, serving us with that quick intuition of our wishes that marks perfect training, I could not but observe what a remarkably refined-looking man he was.

Tall, straight, with light moustache and hair that stood up from his forehead, he had quite the appearance of "the distinguished foreigner." He spoke English fluently, though with a slight French accent, and answered with the utmost intelligence and politeness all the questions that we put to him in regard to Interlaken and its surroundings.

When we rose to leave the table he drew our chairs away and preceded us to door, which he flung open, standing aside for us to pass with a bow that would have done credit to a courtier.

I felt rather than saw that his quick, bright eyes were fixed upon us and that he was regarding me particularly—but there was nothing impertinent in his gaze.

While Flo and Aunt Mary went upstairs for their hats and sunshades, preparatory to a stroll among the shops, I sauntered out upon the broad lawn, when a voice behind me said, politely:

"Your pardon, mademoiselle, but I think you left this in the dining-room."

Turning, I beheld our waiter holding in his outstretched arms my white woollen shawl, which I now remembered having tossed into the chair next to mine when I entered the room.

"Oh, thank you very much," I said; I was about to take it from him when, with a quick movement, he flung it lightly about my shoulders.

"The mornings are cool; I feared you might need it, mademoiselle, and so took the liberty of bringing it to you. Again I ask your pardon." He bowed respectively and withdrew.

While he spoke, his nervous eyes had rested with a most peculiar expression upon my face; but in spite of the familiarity of his action, his manner had been perfectly deferential. I gazed after him in blank surprise, scarcely knowing whether to be annoyed or amused; and just then Flo and Aunt Mary came down, ready for their walk, and we set out.

We were charmed with Interlaken, with the situation, with the scenery, with the people. We were as comfortable as possible. Our hotel was a model one. But I think that which more than all contributed to the enjoyment of our stay was the attention of Carl, our waiter.

From that first morning, he had, as it were, taken us under his special protection and left nothing undone that could add to our comfort.

He was quick to see what was needed, so solicitous of our welfare, and yet, with it all, so perfectly respectful that it was a pleasure to have him about.

Sometimes, indeed, it struck me that he was a little more attentive to *my* wants than to those of Flo and Aunt Mary.

If, for instance, I happened to leave my wrap or my book upstairs, he noticed their absence at once and ran to fetch them for me; and now and then I would catch his eye fixed upon me with that peculiar expression that I had noticed on the day he brought me my shawl. But, as the others did not appear to observe this, I suppose it was my imagination.

On one or two occasions he had brought to my door some flowers which he said had been left from those provided for the table decorations and which he thought I might enjoy.

It struck me at the time that this was, perhaps, just a little—but then, how could I refuse? He certainly meant it only as a kindness, and though it was not quite what one would have expected from a waiter, I should have hurt his feeling had I not accepted them. Besides, Flo said I had done quite right, though she laughed about it for a long time afterwards.

Whenever we left the dining-room Carl always contrived to be near the door, and as we passed out he would make some pleasant remark—generally to me. Of course, there was very little opportunity for him to converse with me, except during breakfast, which I usually took by myself, as Flo and Aunt Mary made it a regular practice to sleep late every morning. Then Carl and I would have quiet little talks together, and it

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was through them that I learnt something of his history.

As I had always surmised, he had been born to a position in life quite different from that which he now occupied. His father and mother were Alsatians—people of some account in Strasburg—and he had himself been at one time tutor in French and German in the family of an English gentleman. But reverses had come and "Fate had been his enemy," as he touchingly expressed it, until now he was reduced to serve as a waiter.

"But surely," said I one day, when he had been telling me of his woes, "surely with your education and accomplishments you need not stay here, you can find a position and work more worthy of you?"

He shook his head sadly. "Mademoiselle does not know all," he said. "There are some reasons which cannot be explained. I have a duty to perform for my unhappy country, bound under the hated foreign yoke." Then bending low, he whispered:

"My name is not Carl; that is the name of a German—a tyrant!"

"But in some other country where you are not known," I urged. "In England; surely there is a field for you?"

He shook his head again. "It is my oath, mademoiselle. I am pledged on my honour to remain here. You cannot understand, because I cannot explain."

And then he hinted darkly at a political embassy upon which he was employed—a mission for his country which rendered his incognito a necessity.

As I rose from the table I heard something strike the floor at my side. It was the amber pin which I usually wore in my hair, and which had in some unaccountable way become loosened. I was scarcely aware that it had fallen when Carl's quick eyes spied it, and before I could stretch out my hand to take it from him, with a deft movement he had replaced it in my hair.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," he said, as he drew back his hand. "Perhaps I should not have taken the liberty, but it was a service for you—and—your hair, it was so beautiful. I could not help it."

What could I say? He should not have done it, of course, it was frightfully familiar. And yet his manner was so respectful that it was impossible to take offence.

We had been ten days at Interlaken, and intended to stay a fortnight, but during that evening Aunt Mary received a letter from a friend who was ill at Lucerne, which necessitated our making a change of plans, and going away in the morning. "So, girls, this will be our last night here," she said. "You must get your trunks ready for an early start."

As she spoke I heard a deep, long-drawn sigh, so near to me that I was fairly startled. At first I thought it came from Flo, but on turning to look at her I saw that, though she was evidently struggling with some emotion and was choking and gasping over her soup in a way that bade fair to end in strangulation, the motion appeared to be only suppressed laughter.

The sigh could, then, have only come from Carl, who, as usual, stood directly behind my chair.

"Poor fellow," thought I; "I suppose he is thinking of his oath and his duty; no wonder he feels sad." And when, a moment later, he passed me the bread, I took a piece, which I did not want, out of pure sympathy for him and because to refuse it seemed somehow like slighting him.

As soon as dinner was over Aunt Mary went to her room to do her packing. Flo asked me to join her in a farewell shopping excursion, but I declined, for I hate shopping and preferred to spend the last evening in the society of the Jungfrau.

So off she went with some friends, mumbling some rubbish or other about sentiment and moonlight—Flo has no appreciation of Nature, and is always teasing me about what she is pleased to term my "sentimentality."

It was a heavenly night. I strolled idly along the promenade, enjoying the loveliness of the scene. The long row of hotels that fronted the promenade were all brilliant with electric light and thronged with merry people.

In the garden of one of them, beneath the spreading chestnuts, a band of Neapolitans, gaily costumed in red and white, were singing the popular songs of Italy. They played divinely, and I sank down on one of the benches beneath the trees of the promenade to listen to them.

I fell into a reverie and sat there listening, scarcely conscious of the passing of the time and but half aware that someone had come up and was standing but a few feet from me.

A deep, long-drawn sigh startled me to a sense of my surroundings, and, turning my head quickly, I perceived the figure of a man just behind me. He stood well in the shadow, so that I could not see his face; but in the slim erect figure and the manner of holding his hands behind his back I recognised Carl, our waiter.

"Oh, Carl! how you startled me," I said, as soon as I had recovered from the surprise which his presence caused me.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, if I intruded," he said, gently, moving a step nearer. "But I did not mean to alarm you. I, too, have been listening to the music, and I thought there could be no harm—"

"Why, of course, there is no harm, Carl," I answered, kindly. "The music is lovely. I have been making the most of my last evening here; we leave in the morning for Lucerne."

"Yes, I know that," he replied, sighing again; "I know that it is the last night." His tone was wonderfully sad, but I supposed it was his own affairs that troubled him—I never thought of connecting his sorrow in any way with my departure.

"I shall be sorry to leave, too," I continued, dreamily. "It is so quiet and beautiful here, and everyone has been so kind to us. I am sure I shall not find Lucerne half so charming."

"And must you, then, really go, mademoiselle?" he asked, eagerly. "Can you not remain, since you are so satisfied here?"

"I fear not, Carl," I answered, laughing. "My aunt would scarcely be willing to leave me by myself."

"Ah, true; I had forgotten," he murmured, lapsing into silence again.

"It seems so strange," I continued, half to myself, "to find a place where one is quite content; to settle down and live there; to actually become a part of it for a few weeks, and then to pass on, perhaps never to return."

"Ah, no, no, mademoiselle! Do not, I pray you—do not say that!" he cried. "You do not know what you are saying—what your words are to me—you, so kind, so good, so sympathetic——."

"Why, Carl!" said I smilingly, looking round at him in surprise. "You are excited, surely. It is pleasant to think that we perhaps have helped you a little, but we

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must go on, of course; that is to be expected. Surely that is something that happens to all of us."

"Yes. it is always so," he said, gloomily; "with places, with persons, with everything. We see them, we are fascinated by them, we strive after them, they become our ideals, and then—they pass out of our lives for ever."

"Ah, but that need not be so; that is not true if one is determined that they shall not pass out of one's life," said I.

He came a step nearer and laid his hand on the back of the seat.

"You really mean that, mademoiselle?" he said, his breath coming fast. "You mean that it is possible to hold one's—to one's ideals in spite of fate?"

"Assuredly it is," said I, "if one sets about it in the right way."

"And how is that?" he asked with interest.

"It is because 'Fate,' as you call it, is merely a combination of circumstances, many of which lie distinctly within our control. All those who enter our lives, but especially those by whom we are attracted, leave their impress upon our characters—an impress which we cannot altogether obliterate, but which we may strengthen, if we will, by constantly holding up to ourselves for contemplation and imitation those qualities in them which we love and admire, till we ourselves gradually draw nearer and nearer in spirit to our ideals."

I spoke, perhaps, with unnecessary fervour, quite forgetting, in setting forth a favourite theory, that I was addressing only a waiter. But the effect upon him was electrical.

"Ah, mademoiselle, you give me hope!" he cried, eagerly; and as I turned to look at him, wondering at his intensity, he held up his hand to implore my silence while he continued rapidly: "Mademoiselle, from time to time I have told you somewhat of myself—of my history—to which you have listened with the patience, with the sympathy of an angel. You know that I am not—how do you say it?—in my true station; that I am forced to occupy a position lower than that for which I am fitted. But, oh! mademoiselle, you do not know how, ever since I have seen you, I have been another man. How it has been the delight of my life to be near you—to wait upon you! How all the years I have suffered have been wiped away in the delight of your presence!"

"No, do not stop me, mademoiselle, I beg," he implored, as I rose overcome by surprise at his speech.

"Your own words have given me courage, have given me hope. You tell me that an ideal may be won, may be held in spite of all. Then pardon me, mademoiselle, if I ask you—if I dare to ask you—to listen to my plea. I am only a waiter, and you a lady—perhaps a great lady—I do not know; but if you knew, if you could guess how much you are to me, you would take pity. With you to help me, I could go on; could fight against this cruel fate that holds me down. You would inspire me to be myself—to overcome——" He stopped, his voice quivering with the intense emotion of his plea.

As for me, I was too utterly overwhelmed with astonishment to speak for a moment. "Do you mean to say—to ask me——" I managed to gasp at last.

"Yes, yes, that is it!" he interrupted, eagerly. "I mean to say that I love you, that I want——"

"Oh, hush! for Heaven's sake, hush!" I cried fearful lest someone should overhear us. "What can I do; what can I say to you?" I wailed. "How could I dream that you felt so towards me? What have I done to make you speak so to me?"

I felt indignant; and yet, unconsciously, by my own words I had actually given him encouragement. I could not, therefore, blame him wholly, and to treat with contempt a declaration so manifestly sincere, although so out of place, would have been heartless. As well as I could for nervousness, I gathered up my wits and spoke to him.

"Carl," I said, "you have made a great mistake; and how grieved I am that it should be so I cannot tell you. What you desire is, of course, out of the question—is impossible—for many reasons. And yet, if all you say is true, if I have helped you, if in your difficult position it can still be a help to you to think of me as—as—an ideal—why, then I have no right to forbid you to do so. But, oh, it must be as an ideal only; you must not see me again; indeed, indeed, you must not. Now good-night, good-bye."

I held out my hand, he took it in both of his, bent over it a moment, and then let it go. I gathered up my shawl and fled back to the hotel, leaving him standing there motionless, his hands by his sides, his head bent forward on his breast.

Next morning we left Interlaken.

It is needless to say that breakfast was sent to my room, and I went direct to the carriage, so that Carl and I met no more. But I could not help my thoughts reverting to him with a pity in which there was nothing of contempt.

Often in the years that followed I saw him standing as I had left him—his head bent sorrowfully upon his breast. Yes, I thought tenderly of Carl, though in the eyes of the world the affair might have appeared ridiculous. I was glad that I had been a help to him. It was something to have been one man's ideal, chosen from among the whole world of women, even if that man was only a waiter.

* * * * *

Five years later Flo and I revisited Interlaken and stopped once more at the same hotel. To me the place seemed very little changed. The scenery was as lovely, the hotel quite as comfortable and our little German host as attentive as before. But Carl was there no longer.

I naturally felt a slight embarrassment in speaking of him, but curiosity got the better of me.

One evening while chatting with the proprietor in the hall, I turned the conversation in that direction.

"By the way," I asked quite casually, "*à propos* of waiters, what has become of a very excellent one whom you had in your employ when we were here before? A young German, or Alsatian, called, let me see, I think it was Carl."

The proprietor scanned me rather quizzically for a moment, and, I thought, with special attention to my hair.

"Oh, Carl," he said; "he vas in de mad-house; I tink it vas now five years."

"In a mad-house!" I gasped.

"Oh, yes," he said. "He vas mad like, how you say?—a hatter. He tought he vas all sorts of tings in de secret services of de country."

"And he was not?" I asked; "he has never been?"

"No; he had travelled much, and had read much books; but he never been noting at all only just a waiter. He had, vat you call it, the mania for red hair. It made him crazy-like. I remember, it vas five years ago, and ve had de unusual number of de red-haired ladies in de house dat summer. Vell, Carl, poor fellow, he couldn't stand it, de strain vas too much for him, he propose to dem all!"

Walter Wilson.

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THE MISSING BONDS.

A BANK MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

CLOSE AT HAND.

THERE had been a full half-minute of expressive silence at the breakfast-table of old John Belford, the banker.

"Gideon!"

The old-fashioned name seemed set to a sort of conversational music by the rich, full tones which uttered it, and it was followed, in default of any instant reply, by:

"I'm going to do you a very great favour."

"You don't say so? Well, I'm ready; all my firmness is rallied."

"No, sir; you may finish your coffee."

"And then the astonishment?"

"You can have that now. I've tickets for the concert to-morrow evening, and you're to take me."

"Ruth, my dear!"

Mrs. Belford, from behind the urn, spoke quite suddenly, and Gideon showed his presence of mind by promptly remarking:

"Mrs. Belford, I'm deeply obliged to you. Those are the very words, only I should not have dared——"

The lady of the house was not at that moment smiling upon her husband's big, yellow-haired step-son. She even in a manner cut him off by repeating, in a tone of reproof:

"Ruth, my dear!" and then, after a dignified pause, she added, "did not Mr. Marvin Belford speak to you about this very concert?"

"Did he?" growled old John Belford from the other end of the table; "then Ruth's right. Self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"Ruth," said Gideon, "I'm your man. I'll save you at any cost."

"It will cost you nothing at all, sir, and the music will be good. Besides, I shall wear a new dress, and be unusually handsome. You will be a much envied man."

"And Marvin," smiled Gideon, "will love me better than ever, and I shall be happy."

Gideon Street did not look like a man to be much troubled by the opinions of other people, particularly of anybody he was just then thinking of. Neither did he bear the customary marks of a general favourite among men or women.

It is not easy to make a pet of a broad-shouldered, bearded Viking, with steel-gray eyes, and a deep voice.

Through all the explanatory remarks which followed, he was profoundly polite to Mrs. Belford, and a little more so to Ruth; but there was all the while a species of suppressed chuckle in ambush behind the politeness.

"Ruth Faraday," exclaimed Mrs. Belford at last, "you are much too severe upon your cousin. Marvin Belford is one of Nature's noblemen."

"He's not a cousin of mine, Aunt Carrie; and I must say I think that Nature might have done better."

"And not try very hard," muttered Gideon Street.

At that moment, Mr. Belford said to his wife:

"Now, Carrie, you must let us go. I want a talk with Gid in the library, about some business matters. You can have him, Ruth, after I've done with him."

"I don't want him, Uncle John. I'll be perfectly fair. He need not come near me again until it's time to start for the concert."

"That's fair," said Gideon.

"And even then I won't expect him to talk. All he really need do is to look round him and smile now and then, after I've led him to the right seats."

Her dark, brilliant eyes were dancing with fun, and Gideon, as he slowly rose from the table, thrust his face half-way across it with a remarkable contortion of his manly features, as he asked:

"Would something like this do?"

"Not if there were children."

"Well, you must put me in mind, you know. I can smile."

An hour or so later, without any smile at all upon his face, Gideon Street came out of John Belford's library.

He carried in one hand a Gladstone bag of respectable size, and on his hasty march towards the front door he muttered:

"Good! They've gone upstairs. Shan't have to answer any questions."

Behind him, in the luxurious library, the stalwart, grim old banker sat by the table in the centre, very much as if he were listening for the sound of the closing of the front door.

It came—a sharp, decisive sound—and his heavy fist fell upon the table with a thud.

"That's attended to," he said. "I believe I can trust him. There'll be music all round before a great while, but I don't believe I shall hear much of it. The rest of them, though, will all have tickets."

There was mention being made of tickets and music at that very moment in the drawing-room, for, although Mr. Marvin Belford had been there some time, he had been but a few minutes in the enjoyment of Ruth Faraday's conversation.

He was not so tall nor so strong a man as Gideon Street, but he was much better-looking, his eyes and hair were darker, and he was dressed with more care.

His response to Ruth's greeting had been made with a grace which did him credit, but the pair, had they been listening, might have heard the street door open and shut just as the young lady innocently remarked:

"The concert? Delightful? Yes, it will be no doubt. Mr. Street has promised to take me."

"Con—— him! You're booked already! Too late, am I? Now, Ruth, you might have known I should come. Gid Street, too!"

"Well, yes, I did think you possibly might, but I could not run any risk. I've been of age now these three days, and it's made me ever so much wiser than I used to be."

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"Nothing could make you more beautiful, Ruth."

"Now, Mr. Belford, you must call me Miss Faraday. I'm quite taken with my new dignity and I mean to claim all its advantages."

"What? With me, Ruth?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"I've known you from childhood. You used to call me your cousin, and Marvin, and——"

There was a touch of earnestness in his voice and manner, enough to suggest something more than a whim in Ruth's forethought concerning the concert.

Her interruption was baldly matter-of-fact.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Belford, that's all very true; but I insist upon being a grown-up young lady now. Call me Miss Faraday, and tell me whom you think you'll take to the concert, now you find I'm out of the question."

"Nobody on earth."

"Now, Mr. Belford! You're not acquainted anywhere else? Why can't you be good and unselfish, just for once, and ask some homely girl?"

"I declare I will! I'll get the ugliest, worst-dressed, most ill-tempered, cross-eyed——"

"Poor, too; don't forget that."

The rest of that conversation was not worth repeating on behalf of Marvin Belford.

It was a relief to him, at last, when Mrs. John Belford came into the room, called him her "dear nephew," and gave him the stately kiss of an admiring aunt.

It is quite possible she might have been doing better service in the library at that moment, in the part of a devoted wife.

There sat the banker yet, by the table, his grey head bowed upon his wrinkled hands, and the voice which came through them almost sepulchral:

"I can't quite make up my mind to it, but I know it's coming. It has waited a long time, but it will not wait much longer now. Glad I can trust Gid. It's a strange thing to think of, and to know it is so close at hand, after all these years. Coming—coming. I cannot make up my mind to it. She is a good girl, and I've loved her ever since she was born."

CHAPTER II.

The First Blow Falls.

There were five persons whose grave position or duty gave them access to the strong-room belonging to Belford Brothers, the well-known and highly-respected banking-house.

Of these, the first two, the heads of the house, John, and his brother, William, rarely looked into it.

Those who did so more frequently were the junior partner, Mr. Marvin Belford; the spectacled book-keeper, Mr. Ruggles; and Mr. Gideon Street, in his confidential capacity of cashier.

The minor dignitaries of the ancient house could all say, indeed, that they had often looked in upon the sombre security of that iron-bound cell; they had even awe-struck memories of having put their feet inside it; but not one of them had been entrusted with the keys of the massive locks.

But on the day after the events just narrated, there were five consecutive visitors to the strong room, and each in turn found some attraction for his eyes in a large oblong package, tied with cross-belts of red tape, which lay a little by itself on one of the lower shelves.

The ancient book-keeper did not touch the package but he bent his white head over it as he said:

"Miss Faraday's bonds? Well, they're a special deposit, but I wish they were somewhere else. It won't do for me to meddle; but her uncle ought to look out for that. I forgot: Mr. John Belford does not know exactly."

He shut his lips tightly and went out.

His place was soon after taken by the portly form of Mr. William Belford, more grim and stately than his brother John, and more a walking assurance of financial solvency.

He glanced round the safe, to see that all was right, and his cold brown eyes rested on the package.

"Ruth's fortune, eh? We must look out for that, for Marvin's sake. I must tell John to put it somewhere else. He doesn't know the real condition of things, but I can give him a reason for it."

His heavy, stately tread passed out of the strong-room, and he may have been correct as to his brother ignorance of peril to that package, for in less than ten minutes later John Belford was regarding "Ruth's fortune" with an iron smile, and hoarsely chuckling over it.

"That's safe, at all events. I owed that much to her mother. I'm glad nobody can touch it."

It was necessary, a little later, for Gideon Street to carry into the vault a small, japanned tin box, and the smile he turned upon the tape-bound parcel would have answered him admirably for skirmish uses at the concert on the coming evening.

"There it is. Ruth is more of an heiress than I thought for. The old gentleman's managed well for her."

The smile faded as he spoke, and its place was taken first by a crimson flush and then by a singular paleness.

"They're not for you, Gideon, my boy. Any fool can see that. Do your duty, but don't you let it make a fool of you."

Excellent words to be uttered in the strong-room of a bank, whether as a riddle, or an exhortation; and when he had taken one more look, he returned to his desk.

It was late in the day before Mr. Marvin Belford found any occasion for crossing that iron threshold, and when he did so, there were no eyes upon him.

He had a deposit to make, taking it from a travelling-bag which he carried in his hand.

It was an oblong package, fastened curiously with red tape, and when he put it down upon the shelf beside Ruth Faraday's fortune, he was certainly justified in remarking:

"No man alive could tell them apart. Even the tape is of the same width, and the creases in the paper come exactly right. A perfect pair of twins."

He was evidently pleased with the comparison he was making, but at the end of it he picked up one of the "twins," and slipped it into his hand-bag.

A change of mind, doubtless, and he had decided not to leave his deposit in the vault, for he carried that bag with him in his cab, after banking hours, when he went home. He seemed in low spirits, too, all the way, and it was probably well for him that he had in prospect an evening of amusement.

He went to the concert, truly, but he had failed to comply with the charitable suggestion of Ruth Faraday, for she herself could claim no great advantages over the well-dressed girl at the side of Marvin Belford.

"Shall I smile on him, Ruth?" asked Gideon. "I want to do so."

"Do, please—your very best. It's just what I've been doing."

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"Yes, I saw; and he tried to smile back. Failed awfully. I'll give him a chance to try again if I catch his eye. He loves me."

"There! you hit him."

There are a few things which Ruth either had not yet learned, or had forgotten.

For instance, you may know a man for years and years, and you may respect him exceedingly; he may even be your uncle's step-son and live a good while in the same house with you, and yet you may not become the least bit in the world intimate with him—especially if you have it in your mind that you half-way dislike him, and can't tell why.

If, however, you begin to let him slip from "old acquaintance" into "old friend," there is no telling how far he will slip along the line—or you either. It is a very slippery line.

That night, however, Ruth was in remarkably high spirits, and Gideon had something upon his mind which absolutely compelled him to smile occasionally.

Mrs. John Belford had retired before her husband's niece returned from the concert, but he was up still, and he waylaid Ruth as she passed the library door.

"Come in, my dear," he said, as he slowly returned to his seat by the table.

"What is it, Uncle John?" Her fair face was yet flushed with excitement and pleasure as she stepped lightly in, but she quickly added: "Are you not well? Is there anything the matter?"

He was looking in her face earnestly and lovingly, but there was a white, strange shade on his features as of suppressed and bitter pain.

"Nothing at all, my dear. Listen to me: can you keep a secret?"

She was serious enough now, as she listened to those deep, ominous, all but tremulous tones.

"I can," she replied. "Try me."

"It may not seem a great one just now, but you must keep it. You are good friends with Gideon?"

"Good enough, Uncle John, especially this evening."

"The music was good?"

"A charming concert. But what about Gideon?"

"He is a man to be trusted. In a little while it will be necessary for you to trust someone. Trust him. Not anybody else."

"Not even you?"

"No, not even me. I am an old rascal. He is young and honest. No matter what turns up, trust Gideon Street."

"What can you mean?"

"Go to bed now. Keep your secret. One of these days you will know what I mean."

She tried again, but there was no breath of explanation to be obtained from the old gentleman. His face grew hard and his voice harsh, but he kept to himself all the remainder of his secret.

The next day things seemed to go on as usual, but if John Belford had intended a deep and cunning plot to increase the distance in Ruth Faraday's behaviour to Gideon, he had planned well, and with complete success. Even smiles across the table died like flowers in frost.

Gideon took it all with external calmness, and Ruth could not complain of any attempt on his part to break the barrier of ice she had so unaccountably raised.

The days went by for about a fortnight in a curiously chilly way, considering how fine was the bright October weather, and then there came a great sensation to a very wide social and financial "circle."

Gideon Street carried it down to the bank, and delivered it to Mr. William Belford and his son Marvin, on their arrival. A telegram sent earlier had missed them.

"Apoplexy? Dead in his bed? Marvin, come in with me at once. This is an awful blow!"

In half-a-minute more the two were closeted in the private office at the bank, leaving Gideon and Mr. Ruggles to spread the sensation as customers came in.

* * * * *

"Father," asked Marvin, "had you any suspicion of such a danger?"

"Knew he'd been in fear of it this long time. He was under medical treatment. Well, he's gone!—Marvin, this will precipitate matters. This will be a rough day, but you can keep all steady while I drive to John's house and back. I'll see Carrie, and give some directions, and then we must prepare——"

"For a storm? No, I don't see how it can come to-day."

"It will come. I've been fighting it off these ten years."

"Nobody knows there's any deficit any more than they did yesterday."

"You're not as old as I am. I can feel it in my bones."

He hurriedly left the bank, and drove away, and it did seem for awhile as if he had been under some mistake.

Not a breath of suspicion had ever blown upon the credit of Belford Brothers. In this, their hour of trial, they were entitled to all imaginable sympathy and business courtesy, and it was lavishly extended to them—especially the sympathy, in many and varied expressions thereof.

Still, as the day went by, and after William Belford's return, a good many people seemed to be in need of money, and those who had any right to draw on Belford Brothers "at sight" began to do so.

"We've weathered it, father," said Marvin, at three o'clock.

"How about to-morrow?"

"Well, the funeral won't be till the day after that——"

"John's or the bank's? I tell you, my boy, there is something in the air. That affair will have to come out if we suspend. There is one thing we might do——"

"Not with my consent."

"Never mind, now. I will think about it. That would tide us over, and we could arrange afterwards."

"Never! And we can weather it just as well without."

"Don't you be too sanguine. You'd better look in at John's with me on our way home."

That had been a dark day at the banker's residence.

Gideon Street had been glad to get away from it in the morning on the plea of business necessity. He had discovered, before going, that his affection for his step-father had been stronger than he knew, and so the blow fell on him the more heavily.

He had also been astonished at the extreme grief expressed by Ruth Faraday; but he had been greatly puzzled by a thing he heard her whispering to herself, as she leaned above the cold face of her uncle:

"I know now a part of what he meant. What can the rest of it be? This was coming then, and he knew it."

Gideon had not heard Mrs. Belford say, in the shelter of the curtained window:

"I'm glad my own property is settled on me. William will be in control of everything else."

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Nevertheless, it was not without some show of reason that Gideon had remarked to Ruth, before he left the house:

"I will say just one word. I'm glad there's one person besides myself with heart enough to be genuinely sorry."

"Why, Gideon, I loved him."

"He loved you, too, and you will know it some day."

"I'm sure he thought everything of you. But I can't talk now. Do you think they will come here immediately."

"Of course they will. I don't mean to be here when they come."

Ruth was within a breath of saying: "I wish you would!" but she did not say it, and so, when William Belford and Marvin called to mingle their grief with that of the stricken household, Gideon was not there.

CHAPTER III.

An Awkward Discovery.

It was the middle of the day before the funeral, and the private room of the old banking-house contained only Mr. William Belford and his son. Business went on in the outer office in a manner strictly conformed to the needs and proprieties of so sombre a state of affairs,

"Marvin, it's only a loan."

"I protest!"

"You have no right as yet. If you and Ruth were already married, it would be different, I am my brother's sole executor."

"What of that, father? Ruth is of age. This is her own private property. You've no control. I doubt if Uncle John would have any by right, if he were alive."

"It's a deposit, Marvin; I won't break if I can help it!"

The oblong, tape-bound package lay on the table before him, and he tore it open with a movement so sudden, that Marvin's outstretched hand was all too late.

"What! What is this?"

"Mere waste paper!"

"Whose work is this?"

It was hard to say which face of those two was changing colour and expression the more rapidly as their eyes glanced from each other to the heap of rubbish on the table.

"Could Uncle John——"

"No, indeed! Nor old Ruggles. This is worse than the deficit. It is utter and everlasting ruin!"

"There is but one other man."

"Gideon! Call him in."

In a moment more Mr. William Bedford was sternly pointing to the contents of Ruth Faraday's special deposit and demanding:

"What does this mean, Mr. Street?"

"Rubbish, I should say. Why?"

"What do you know about it?"

"Nothing at all."

"Mr. Street, do you know we have found a large deficit in the books of this house?"

"Perfectly well."

"And now here is this robbery, evidently committed by someone who had access to the vault."

"It looks very bad indeed."

Not a hair of Gideon's yellow beard and moustache quivered, but the latter had a twitch in them as if they were beginning to curl a little.

"Have you any explanation to offer?" thundered the banker.

"Possibly I have. The plundering has been done quite systematically. I think it has required co-operative labour—say of two persons, at least."

"Sir, I will have you arrested!"

"A scapegoat would certainly be desirable, but I doubt if I am the right man. I shall certainly refuse to serve."

"Leave the room, sir!"

"I will, and I shall also immediately leave the bank, but not the town. I shall not run away, Mr. Belford."

"Go, sir! Go."

He went, not hastily, nor as one who had flight in his mind.

"Marvin, this is awful! We can stand it through to-day."

"To-morrow is the funeral, next day Sunday. We shall not open our doors again, father, now those drafts are coming."

"We can't pay ten shillings in the pound; but we shall manage to keep a-going till three o'clock."

So they did, but the air was becoming mysteriously filled with rumours undefined concerning the stability of the bereaved firm.

It was surprising how many men were ready to remark, "I don't know what to think about it; John was the backbone of the house." And he was dead, and that very evening his brother was compelled to remark to his widow, "There will be nothing to divide, Carrie."

"What, William! Nothing?"

"Not a shilling. There has been a heavy defalcation, heavy losses on top of it. Quite a run now, and more coming. The house will go into bankruptcy to-morrow."

"Oh, Mr. Belford," suddenly exclaimed Ruth, whose ears had lost no word he had been saying, "can I not help you? There are my bonds; take them. Uncle John said he had more than doubled the amount left me."

Mrs. Belford was staring at her brother-in-law in opened-eyed, silent astonishment, while he on his part seemed struggling with a great gasp of some kind, as he turned his head away from the tearful generosity in Ruth Faraday's face.

"Your bonds, my dear? There has been a robbery as well as a defalcation. Your fortune is all gone—every penny of it."

"Robbery? All gone? Who could have done it?"

"It's all a robbery!" all but Mrs. Belford screamed. "Who did it, William? Who did it?"

"Be calm, Carrie, be calm. It's an awful state of affairs. Tell me, did Gideon Street come home as usual?"

"Yes, but he went out again."

"I doubt if you will see him again very soon. Thank you for your kind offer Carrie. It is time for me to go."

"Do you suspect Gideon?"

"I will not say more now."

"I will, then," said Ruth firmly. "I do not suspect him. You must not do anything against him, so far as I am concerned."

"My dear, generous hearted girl, things must take their own course."

There was nothing Ruth could think of in reply to

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that, and, after Mr. Belford withdrew, she had quite enough to do in soothing the now hysterical grief of the bankrupt's widow.

Only one gleam of common-sense broke through the black cloud of all that wifely sorrow.

"Ruth Faraday," she said, "how could you be such a fool? If your fortune had been in your own hands, you'd have lent it to them, and you'd have lost it. It's just as well somebody stole it. I'm glad mine's safe, what there is of it. What will become of you?"

That was a question with which Ruth had not yet begun to wrestle but she saw that it must come, by the light Mrs. Belford let in upon her.

She said nothing at that moment, but she did a great deal of thinking all that evening, while she sat alone in the library wondering when Gideon Street would return and what could keep him so late. So late? It was very late; and the thought whispered to her at last that she would rather not see him when he came in, for she would not dare to tell him the dreadful things Mr. William Belford had said about him.

Gideon chose his own hour, and he did not return, but he was at the breakfast-table next morning, as usual.

He was all alone, for neither of the ladies came down. Then he went to his own room, and, some hours later, none of those who gathered to join in the solemn ceremonials of the occasion perceived, in his behaviour, or in that of any member of the Belford family, a trace of improper feeling, only the uncommunicative reserve of men and women in affliction.

Perhaps it was as much Ruth's fault as anyone's that Gideon Street, and not Marvin Belford, assisted her to a carriage, and took a vacant seat beside her.

All the proprieties were duly observed but in less than an hour after the return from the funeral, a couple of gentleman called to see Mr. Street.

He went out with them, and did not return that day; he did not even leave word where he was going, or send back any message to inform his anxious friends why he should not come back.

CHAPTER IV.

Hoist With His Own Petard.

That same night, it was well known in the financial community that Belford Brothers would never again open their doors for business. It was known, too, that there were "some particular nasty features" about the failure.

Mr. Marvin Belford's own room was, therefore, the most comfortable place for him to be in, and he was there; but he had been somewhere else first. He had spent an hour with Ruth Faraday, and he was evidently thinking about her now, as he sat and stared at the small bit of coal in the grate before him.

"I've been too fast with Ruth," he said aloud. "She's feeling awfully cut up just now, I ought to have waited. She'll come round, of course, when she wakes up to the facts of the case. Hasn't a glimmer of an idea what it is to work for a living. I shall have to play for a while, but it beats me what I'm to do about those things just now. It's a queer secret to keep, but I'll keep it. Yes, I will, if I have to keep it for ever."

There was something harshly husky in his voice as he uttered the last words.

He rose, and walked slowly to a trunk in a corner.

The door of the room was already locked, so that he was in no danger of intrusion, while he drew from the trunk, and placed upon his table an oblong, tape-bound package, remarking:

"I'll see what there is of it!"

In about half-a-minute more he had seen, and he was staggering back from the table with a large white envelope in his hand.

On the table, released from its careful wrapping, was a heap of old letters, and other worthless things, and Marvin Belford had not found a single word to express the feeling of astounded disappointment with which he had stripped their mockery bare.

That one envelope had lain on top, and was addressed in a large, firm hand to "William Belford Esq."

"I may as well open it," he gasped.

He did so, and the broad sheet of paper he unfolded from it bore only these words:

We are even now, my dear brother. Let us divide the deficit between us, You will not be able to lay your hands upon Ruth's fortune just now.

Affectionately,

John Belford.

"Divide it between them?" gasped Marvin. "I thought as much. All I took didn't make the matter any worse. So Uncle John swamped Ruth, too, did he? It's rough on me just now; but what if she had accepted me? I should have been in a box then."

There was comfort in his misery, therefore, and there was fire in the grate, and all that pile of rubbish would burn, including Uncle John's letter.

That was an uncomfortable evening for a great many people; but not one of all those who mourned for John Belford, or for the failure of the house of which he had been the head, passed the long hours more wretchedly than did Mr. Gideon Street.

There is hardly anything more trying to manly fortitude than an arrest on a felonious accusation, to be locked up over Sunday, to sit and eat one's heart out in solitude, with a prospect of possible years and years of just such looking-up in some lonely cell or other.

"It would be almost as bad to be let out now," said Gideon to himself more than once, "and have men look at me as they will."

Late in the night, as he lay there in the darkness other words burst from him:

"And she! Ruth Faraday, to think I am a thief And that I stole from her!"

It was not exactly a yell of agony, but it was a very good suppressed likeness of one.

He could send for a lawyer, even on Sunday, and he could be assured that his arrest was an unwarrantable, hasty proceeding, and that the magistrate would surely let him out again on Monday morning, after a few formalities, but something very black had settled over the soul of Gideon Street. He knew, as well as if he had been told, that the reason of his absence was now well understood at the residence of John Belford's widow.

What he did not know was that the news had been carried their by Marvin Belford, or how much of emphasis it had added to the replies made by Ruth Faraday to sundry gracefully, even passionately, tendered pleadings.

One night more, a dreadfully dark one, full of tempests out of doors, and marked by other tempests in some homes, and in such dim crypts as they lock up suspected felons in.

Gideon's man of law was right, nevertheless, and

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before mid-day on Monday he was free to walk past the closed doors of the old banking-house.

He knew he was stared at by a number of men who passed him as he came up the street; but only one old acquaintance actually spoke to him.

"What's the cause of the failure?" was Gideon's reply. "Can't say. I'm told the money ran short, and they had to close. I left them the day before. You will have to ask somebody else."

Ruth Faraday was in her own room that afternoon when a servant knocked at the door and told her Mr. Street wished to see her.

"Tell him I'll come down immediately."

Then she sat down upon a trunk she had been packing.

"Gideon," she exclaimed. "I thought he was in prison. What shall I say to him? Guilty? No, indeed; I don't believe a word of it. If I keep waiting he will think I do."

He stood in the middle of the apartment when she flashed in, and she paused a moment.

He had never looked so very large, and strong, and noble, only his face was ghastly white.

"Miss Faraday—"

"Gideon, I don't believe it!"

"But, Miss Faraday, I spent last night, the day before and the night before that, in a police cell. I am dishonoured."

"You did not do it? You did not take their money, or my bonds?"

"Their money—the deficit?—it was gone before I entered the bank. But *I did take your bonds, all of them.*"

"You did? Gideon!"

"Yes, I did. Your uncle gave them to me to keep for you, and I have kept them. Here they are."

She had seen the valise he was now opening. It had given her a swift thought that he was going away, but now he took from it a package which he tore open in her presence.

"Gideon—"

"They are all here, Miss Faraday. I have been true to my trust."

"Don't count them, Gideon; please don't! I would trust you with anything; I promised Uncle John I would. Did you say they put you in prison?"

She was close to him now, and looking up in his face. for the idea was growing upon her that he had somehow been suffering on her account, and the tears were in her eyes and voice.

"Never mind that, Miss Faraday. I can't leave, of course, till the investigation is over. I shall go then; but I wanted to put your property in your own hands as soon as possible."

A great storm was shaking him from head to foot, but his eye and voice were steady till her answer came.

"These things? What on earth can I do with them? Won't you take care of them for me? Wouldn't they help you to get into business, Gideon, or half of them?"

"Ruth Faraday!"

"You are not dishonoured; you are not disgraced. I don't believe a word of it. Won't you, Gideon? Please do."

The tears were pouring down her face in a great shower as she looked upon the terrible pain in his, and her hands went out to him in such a way that he could but take them; they seemed so eager to be taken.

"I suffered all yesterday," she cried, "after I knew what they had done to you."

The two pair of hands—the small ones and the very large ones—clung fast to each other for a moment, and a beautiful light dawned first in Ruth's face, and then in Gideon's.

"Ruth? Is it so, Ruth?"

"Gideon, I've been finding it out for two weeks, but it must have been so long ago."

"I found it out a year ago, and it all but killed me. Yesterday, all the night long, as I lay there——"

"Gideon, please do not! It is dreadful!"

His head had been bending lower and lower for some seconds, and he dropped one of her hands, that his arm might be free.

"Oh, Ruth, I can face anybody now. All the world."

Too much time could not be devoted to this interview, for it was due to Mrs. Belford that the state of affairs should be explained to her.

"I don't understand it at all, Ruth," was the widow's final comment. "It's all terrible. And so your fortune is safe, and you are engaged to Mr. Street, and nobody knew a word about it, and they put him in prison. It's enough to drive me out of my senses."

Ruth had yet another explanation to make that day, and it seemed to puzzle very much a pair of brisk-mannered gentlemen who called to see her on important business.

"Do we understand you aright, Miss Faraday? Do you mean to say you had no property in the hands of Belford Brothers?"

"Not any, sir. It was all removed some time ago—before the death of my uncle. I have not lost anything."

"But Mr. Street is accused——"

"No, he is not, sir; not by me. I am of full age. He has my entire confidence, and he is in entire charge of my business affairs."

"Ah! Certainly. Of course. I think we had better go: do you not, Mr. Johnson?"

"I suppose so. There's an awful leak in this business somewhere. 'Tisn't here."

Ruth Faraday had never in her life before appeared dignified and positive as she did while she was bowing out those two emissaries of law and justice, and there came a rustle of silk behind her as she did so.

"Ruth, dear, I'm so glad Mr. Street saved your bonds! But what will brother William say, and your cousin Marvin?"

"What will they say? I never want to see them again. How will they dare to look Gideon in the face, after what they have done? Arresting him!"

"Oh, dear me! I had almost forgotten about that. I was thinking of you and Marvin."

"Aunt Carrie—well, you might as well know. I told Marvin what I thought of him and his father last night, when he told me they had given Gideon into custody. He will never trouble me any more."

It was not likely he would, now that any vision he might have of Ruth would surely confound itself in his mind with another of Gideon Street.

Nevertheless, after all was settled, even long afterwards, when Mrs. Ruth Street and her husband had freely pardoned everybody, neither Mr. William Belford nor his son, Marvin, was able to give himself a satisfactory explanation of the mystery of the tape-bound package and the bonds it did not contain. Like the long-hidden deficit, it remained one of the "mysteries of banking."

Walter Michael.

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BOOK IV.—CONCERNING A SOJOURN - - AMONGST THE DAJIANS.

CHAPTER II.

How the Dajians foolishly arrived before their appointed time: how Norah wisely and pluckily did the same: how she and the two white men climbed the giant stairs: how they supped off baked eggs: and how Sneyd and O'Neill made a solemn compact.

I AM afraid that Murtagh O'Neill did not get much sleep during the remainder of that night, and I rather think that Laurence Sneyd shared his vigil. But neither of them spoke, so we will not examine their thoughts. Day came, hot and glaring as usual—for it was only the lower ground that was veiled by the morning's mists—and after breaking their fasts, they lay stretched on their moss beds wishing that the leathern-footed hours would deign to hasten their pace.

They had never felt kindly towards the Dajians; but now, if wishes could have done it, the whole aboriginal population of that island would have been swept into eternity in less than a moment of time.

The two were lying listlessly on the moss, pestered by their intruding thoughts, and scheming threatening things in their minds. The sun had passed his zenith, and was arcing a course of scorching splendour away down to the brazen waters of the west, when a sound from behind them made the two prisoners spring to their feet, weapons in hand.

The noise which had disturbed them was the grating of the huge stone that closed the temple doorway. With a noiseless tread, and without interchange of a word, they stationed themselves one on either side of the passage, hidden by the projecting corner from those without, yet in positions which could not be bettered. The great rock rolled upwards, and a couple of savages entered the passage side by side. They walked carelessly through the thickness of the wall, and saw at a glance the attitude their prisoners had taken. But too late. The clubs swung down, and the savages sank to the earth, corpses. Two others pressed forward pluckily enough to avenge their deaths, but only shared the same fate; and after them, others. But their efforts were without avail. Far their superiors in point of physical strength at ordinary times, and stirred up as they were now, either of the white men was more than a match for four of the sturdiest of his opponents.

There was no thought of quarter. It was kill or be killed. The ground was a shambles. The green mossy turf was trampled into a dark red slime. The passage was choked with corpses.

"Out into the open," shouted Sneyd. "They are shutting the door."

He sprang forward as he spoke, beating down a savage who opposed him. O'Neill followed, but it was too late. Those without, terrified at the slaughter which they had witnessed, were shutting in all together; and as the huge stone sank to its place, it crushed the life out of one of their compatriots who was vainly endeavouring to escape from the raging furies who were so remorselessly slaying within. Sneyd's desperate plan of renewing the combat against all comers outside had failed.

The survivors would go away and return shortly with an overwhelming force. Well, they would doubtless contrive to kill some of them too before they fell in their turn. And so they would cross the Styx at the head of a large company. But poor Norah, brave loving girl, what of her? How could she escape from these man eating ruffians?

"Why!" exclaimed O'Neill in his agony, "why are men tortured like this? Why can't they do their devil's work by themselves without dragging a woman into it with them?"

"It isn't your fault," Sneyd said to him soothingly. "Remember you didn't know of her coming. She crossed to Daji of her own free will and accord."

"Don't shpake like that," exclaimed the Irishman roughly. "She's an angel, an' I won't hear a word against her. There, don't take it unkindly. I didn't mane to say anything hard. Ownly, the fact is, I'm nearly off me head wid the thoughts o' what'll happen to her, poor girl, and—Howly wars! there she is, as I'm a red and tatthered sinner."

Sneyd followed his companion's excited gaze, and saw the girl just landing on the top of the wall.

"Norah, Norah darlint," cried O'Neill, "av yez ever loved me, go away out of this. Those murtherin' devils are close beside, an' they may grab yez any minute."

"They've gone away, and they won't be back for another hour," she replied coolly enough. "I've watched everything from the wood, and saw exactly what was going on. There is no fear of them yet. And if they were close at hand, I wouldn't stir without you. Here's the rope. I'll make it fast to the top of the ladder, and then let it down. There; is it long enough? Yes, it is; how fortunate. Be quick and come up now. I'll hold the end."

"Up wid you, Sneyd. You're lightest. And then you can take hold till I'm aloft. I wouldn't have my hulking weight cut her pretty fingers for all the gould in Peru, an' all that's in Chili to boot."

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The clubs swung down, and the savages sank to the earth, corpses.

Up the ex-cornet climbed, hand over fist, and seized the rope from Norah's hand. O'Neill quickly gained the cornice, exchanged one short tender embrace with his sweetheart, and then helped her on to the ladder. She was on the ground in twenty seconds, and in less than the minute the two men were beside her.

O'Neill began to move off up the valley.

The girl hesitated. "I have been hiding in the woods," she said. "There is a very snug place in the middle of a thicket of agave bushes."

"That won't do now, me poor darlint," replied the Irishman. "It will be a hue and cry with a vengeance when they open the cage and find the birds is flown. They didn't guess ye were on the island, an' so they never looked for yez. But they'll know there are three of us here now, bad scram to 'em, an' it's mighty little pace we'll be allowed, accordin' to my way o' thinkin'. So away we go to the mountain."

"Where is the canoe that brought you over, Norah?" asked Sneyd, as the three of them set off at a sharp jog trot.

"I hauled it up and hid it in some mangroves. But the place is a good way from here."

"So much the better. This immediate neighbourhood will be dangerous to our health for some time to come. But if we can contrive to lie low amongst the hills for a few days, till the hottest of the pursuit is over, we may manage to slip down to it some dirty night, and get clear away before the morning's sunrise."

They hurried along over the rough boulder-strewn floor of the valley, heading to what appeared to be the only practicable pass to the upper ground, a narrow sloping gulley where the steep sides joined together. It was little better than a fissure, and a tidy stream of water was foaming down it with monotonous roar. But that path was their only chance. To turn back would, in all probability, be to run into the very arms of the Dajians. And the sides of the valley, near its head were utterly unscaleable. So they went to the foot of the waterfall as fast as their legs would carry them, rested for half a minute to regain their wind, and then began to climb the slippery crags.

Their progress was slow. Though her little feet had never known the protection of a shoe, and their natural soles were not easily affected, the rough jagged stones, over which she had been running for the last two miles, had made poor Norah terribly footsore. She limped along bravely enough, and flatly refused to let O'Neill carry her as he wished to do.

But the pace had slackened for all that towards the end of the run; and when it came to climbing, their forward movement was even more retarded. The fissure had appeared steep from a distance; but on trial it showed itself to be even worse than its looks. It consisted of a series of giant steps, so to speak, many of them nine and ten feet high, and all wet with spray or running water, and greasy with slime.

Each step was gained with a heavy effort. Sneyd climbed on to the Irishman's sturdy shoulders, put his hands on to the slippery ledge above him, took one more step on to the fiery head beneath, gave a spring, and scrambled as best he could. Then leaning down, he caught hold of Norah, who was held up as high as O'Neill could reach, and pulled her up beside him. And then Norah held his legs whilst he stretched over to grasp O'Neill's hand, and lug him up also.

One could hardly conceive a more arduous piece of exercise for a hot day; and had not the water of the fall kept them continuously moist and cool, I don't think they could have stood it. But as it was, remembering what each had at stake, they stuck doggedly to the task, and scaled the steep ascent little by little, till they opened out a small rocky plateau right up in the heart of the crags.

The place was wild in the extreme, and full of strong-beaked sea-fowl, who circled around the intruders' heads, screaming madly and fiercely. On all sides rose bold bare rocks, whose summits had never been crossed by the foot of man. On the stony ground beneath them lay the innumerable nests of the sea-birds, packed so closely that there was not room to tread between them. The threatening attitude of the birds terrified Norah, and instinctively she clung to her lover for protection.

"Never fear me, pretty one," he said to her assuringly, "they'll do yez no hurt. They mayn't be the pleasantest of neighbours. They're dirthy, an' untidy, an' they talk so loud, one can scarcely hear one's own lips move. But they're a sight less harmful than the other two-legged

bastes we've all three been livin' amongst for the last few weeks. Now we must look around us for some sort of a place to camp in for awhile."

"Here we are," said Sneyd cheerily. "These two big stones have got a fair-sized hollow beneath them. The entrance is small, but one can squeeze through, and once inside, we shall find ourselves as snug as can be. We can rob these nests of enough sticks to make a fire, and there's a hole in the roof to let the smoke out. And—by Jove, yes—how fortunate. There's another tiny cave further in, that will make Norah a bed-room. Really, we are in luck's way."

"In wid yez, Norah," exclaimed O'Neill, "an' light us a fire. Here's wood. Sorry to trouble yez, but we're so clumsy at that game. We might rub the stuff to powdher, an' never get it so much as to smoke."

Norah selected a pointed stick about as thick as a lead pencil, and started rubbing it up and down another larger piece of wood which was laid on the ground, working out a narrow groove, and pushing the dust which formed into a heap at the end furthest from her. Presently a thin spiral of smoke commenced to ascend from the wood-dust. She rubbed away industriously, and the smoke increased, till a glow showed through the little pile. Then desisting from her efforts, she piled a few dry splinters on the smouldering ember, fanned it into a blaze with her breath, adding more sticks, and in five minutes from commencing the task, had a reeking fire shooting up flames four feet high.

"Bravo, Norah," said Sneyd, coming in with another armful of fuel. "We people from the west are apt to think a great deal of our cleverness, but that's one thing you can beat us at, and always will do. I've tried times out of number to light a fire in your fashion. But I make myself hotter than I can the tinder. Ha! here's O'Neill with the supper."

"There's two score of eggs at the very laste," said the Irishman, depositing his burden gingerly on the rocky floor. "Some of 'em may be addled; others is shure to have chickens in 'em; but there should be some new-laid, an' on them, plaze the pigs, we'll sup. It don't do to be over dainty, an' besides, there's worst things than say-fowls' eggs. Let the fire burn away a bit, Norah darlint, an' then put 'em into the red embers. They'll bake bravely in their own jackets, just like spuds. An' whilst yez get 'em cooked, we two bhoys 'll go out an' see av we can't lay our fists on something else."

Sneyd looked up inquiringly. The rocky little plateau afforded no other food besides eggs, and the fishy-flavoured gulls who laid them. He was going to make some remark on the futility of such a search, but the Irishman silenced him with a look, and so he went outside without demur.

When they had moved away out of earshot of the girl, O'Neill said, "Those bastes know the road we've gone."

"How did you find that out?"

"Wid me eyes. I thought I'd give a look round when I came for them eggs, an' so crept cautiously up behind that big rock yonder, an' looked down. Come along an' see for yerself."

They went in the direction O'Neill indicated, and peered down into the valley, taking care not to show themselves. A knot of Dajians were standing half-way between the temple and the foot of the waterfall. It was too far for their voices to carry, but their gestures were unmistakable. They had evidently come across some footprints on a piece of soft ground—there were two or three marshy patches beside the stream—for they were examining these every now and then, and trying to follow them up. And what with that, and the fact that one or other of them kept continually pointing to the cliffs above the waterfall, there was not the slightest doubt that they had deduced, from the evidence before them, the route that the fugitives had taken.

Some were evidently for continuing the pursuit without further delay, but a second faction had other ideas. The argument waxed loud and stormy, but those in favour of delay seemed to win the day. For presently the whole band, with the exception of three, stopped and stretched themselves out to rest under the lee of an outlier of rock. The three sped away down the valley, making for the woodland.

"They're going to blockade us. And those three fellows have been sent off for provisions," said Sneyd.

"Maybe," replied O'Neill, "but if so, why do they go to cover? My idea is, that they are keeping out of sight in the hope that we shouldn't know they're there. When night comes they'll scramble up here, an' hope to take us by surprise."

"So much the worse for them," returned Sneyd grimly. "This is a hard position to storm, if it is defended. And that's a thing which can easily be done. Look, there's shot ready piled up for us at the very brink of the precipice. There's been a fall of rock there some time or other, and the stone has cracked into fragments as it fell. There are small pieces that we can heave, and larger pieces that we can't lift. But we can roll them over. I shall have little compunction in giving these brutes a lesson."

"And I none at all," said the Irishman. "I don't love 'em on me own account. But now Norah's here to fight for, it's a regular demon I am, an' no less. Let's be gettin' back now. The poor girl will be fidgeting av we stay away over long. Besides, there's no need to kape a look-out yet awhile. They won't throuble us before dark, an' we've at laste a couple of hours more daylight before us still."

So back they went to the hollow beneath the rocks, and discussed Norah's cookery as merrily and cheerfully as if they were in Maantee's bamboo-house on lovely Erma, and the nearest cannibal Dajian was eighty long miles away.

"Crept cautiously up behind that big rock."

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"That," said O'Neill, "seems the best blow out I've ever had in the whole course of me chequered career. A shaugh of a pipe an' another smile from me Norah's pretty face is the only two things left to make bliss perfect. An' as I can't have the one, I'm going to ask for double allowance of the other. Darlint," he went on, regarding the pretty blushing creature with most affectionate gaze, "I'm prouder of yez than man ever was of woman before; an' it's me firm belief that there's not another girul between here an' Timbuctoo on the one side, an' Chaney on t'other, that would dare what you've done this day. Plaze heaven av we're spared to get back to Erma, his honour the king shall marry us fairly and tightly, an' av I don't make yez a good, kind husband, may I be put out of the world I don't desarve to live in."

Sneyd felt himself somewhat *de trop*, and got up to go, but the warm-hearted Irishman stopped him. "Don't you run away," he exclaimed. "What I said was for all hands to hear. An' besides," he went on in English, "there's another thing. This is an awkward situation for a pretty young girl to be in, trapezing about the country wid her lover an' another single man. Av coorse, these islanders don't think as we do about such matters. They'd throuble their heads very little about it. But dacency's dacency, an' me father always brought me up to respect it. He used to say when I was a gossoon, 'Murtagh, ye young blayguard, be honest av ye can, be prosperous av yez can manage it, be good av they'll let yez; but be dacent whether yez can or can't.' An' those is words I've never forgotten. The girl's goin' to be me wife some day av we get out of this infernal place, but till then I'll thrate her as though she were me own sister, and nothing more or less, heaven help me. And you, you're a gentleman, an' it's the good shipmate you've been to me, come storm, come fine weather; you'll help me to that?"

"I'll be a brother to her also, Murtagh O'Neill. There's my fist on it."

The two exchanged a hard hand-grip, and looked one another steadily in the face for a full minute. Then they turned to talk again to the girl, and the subject was never re-introduced.

CHAPTER III.

How the storming party was repulsed: how the retreat was continued to the mountain tops: how a raid was made for food: and how the Chief Sorcerer came to a bad end.

The night was dark with heavy clouds. A thick rain was driving up the valley. Both Europeans had left their cosy lair, and were spending the night in the open. They might have taken the watch in turn; but each, through an unspoken feeling of delicacy, professed his desire to remain on the look-out. One certainly did lie down for an hour under the big boulder which served to shield them when they reconnoitred in the daytime, whilst the other peered into the blackness over the brink; and so turn and turn about they did manage to snatch a few winks of sleep. But Sneyd had just roused his companion, and the two of them were crouching at the edge of the precipice with every sense on the alert.

"I can hear nothing," the Irishman remarked in a hoarse whisper, after listening intently for a minute or so.

"They are doubtless coming cautiously, and the howling of the wind and the hissing of the rain drown all sounds. But I'm certain that I heard the rattle of a falling stone just before I woke you."

They listened again with all their ears, but no sound could be heard above the swishing of the gale, and the dull monotonous roar of the waterfall. They strained their eyes, but save for the glistening of the wet on the rocks near them, they could see nothing through the deep thick gloom. Their sight could not penetrate the darkness half-a-dozen yards.

"I'm sure that stone wouldn't have toppled down of its own accord," Sneyd mused half aloud, half to himself.

As the murmured words left his lips a black cloud slid past the moon, and a stream of light shot down as though from the opening of a small round trap door away in the heavens. The whole gully was lit up in the instant. It swarmed with naked armed men. Two were scrambling on to the very last step but one of the ascent. The others were moving steadily up behind them.

When the moonlight shone out, each savage instinctively glanced upward, and saw on the brink of the fall, the two white men they had hoped to surprise during their sleep. The pair had risen to their feet as the gentle glare shot out, each holding a huge fragment of rock poised above his head. The savages saw their danger, and several of them tried to retreat. But they were too late. The stones were let fall. One crashed heavily on the rock, and bounding out into the air, flew harmlessly down far over their heads. But the other, truer to its aim, smashed on to an arm of the foremost climber and made him loose his hold. His body reeled backwards, clearing with it him on whose shoulders he stood. The two of them rolled down the steep descent, carrying involuntary havoc as they went; knocking savage after savage from his hold, and reaching the bottom in company with no less than seven other mangled corpses. Again rocks were hurled through the wet night wind, and again the same red drama was re-enacted. The white men were merciless, remorseless. Black clouds slid over the moon again, and the scene was wrapped in dense obscurity. But the avalanche of rock was kept up with unremitting zeal. The Europeans felt that it was no time to offer quarter, and so they gave none. Throwing the lighter stones into the air, rolling the heavier rocks laboriously over the brink of the precipice, they kept up the Titan's hailstorm till the pale lamp on high once more emerged from the obscuring veil.

Then pausing for a moment in their work, they looked down the line of the fall. The black slimy rock was starred with white in every direction where the great stones had cannoned from point to point in their fierce course. Here and there a naked body lay stark still and bruised on a ledge. But at the bottom was the most gruesome sight of all. Scattered over an area twenty yards in diameter were the rest of the savages, lying singly, or in mangled heaps, some, in pools of water, some uncovered, some pressed into the earth by a rude weight of jagged rock; but all motionless, all dead. Every member of the force had been slain. Yes, they looked away down the desolate valley, and scrutinised the cliffs of the fall again—not one had escaped to tell the tale.

Sneyd shuddered. Such awful slaughter appalled him. He was used to seeing death in a good many uncomely shapes, and he had often and often killed his man, and thought nothing of it in the heat of combat. He had seen an ugly shamble at Culloden Moor, in the 'tween decks of the *Sta Thérèsa*, and at other places. But he had never personally swept so many human beings into eternity at one stroke, as it were, as he had helped to do just now.

Some words to this effect escaped his lips.

The Irishman turned on him almost fiercely. "An' you're wishin' some o' them could have escaped?" he cried. "Begob it's meself that would like to see the whole thribe lyin' stark and stiff at the cliff-foot there. When I think what they'll do to me poor girl, av they can lay their murtherin' hands on her, I have no pity. I'd kill 'em when I catch 'em, just as I'd kill muskitties."

"We shall have the whole island at our heels, when this night's work comes to be known."

O'Neill shrugged his shoulders.

"They're all afther us as 'tis. So it can't be worse. Better, in fact, for we've thinned them down a thrifle. But as no one got off, their friends won't know what's happened for a day or two. Then they may send out others to inquire how matters is goin' along, and when they come to the cliff-foot here, what little the birds have left of their dirty

carcasses, will tell the tale pretty plainly. They'll learn to treat us wid more respect, after that, an'll come at us wid caution. But we will be far enough away by the time they do start, and they'll have to find us before they can try to do anything worse."

"Well, there's nothing to keep us standing out here in this cold rain any longer," said Sneyd. "We shan't be disturbed for the rest of the night, and for the whole of to-morrow, at any rate; so we may as well turn in now, and get a good long sleep, whilst we have the chance. Heaven knows when the next opportunity may occur."

"Slape's the best thing for us," assented the Irishman, turning away towards their shelter with his companion. "But don't tell Norah how we've been spendin' our evening. 'Twould do no good; an' although the poor darlint isn't squeamish—thanks to the devilment she's been forced to see these past two months—it's best to kape her in the dark as much as possible, about the hot way these blayguards are chasin' afther us."

They crept through the narrow opening into their den, raked up the smouldering embers of the fire, and replenished it with fresh fuel; and then, lying down in the warmth, were quickly asleep.

The sun was high up in the heavens when they woke. The tired girl was slumbering still, and as there was no need for it, they did not disturb her, but going outside, collected a fresh supply of eggs for their breakfast.

"The nests we emptied yesterday are replenished again, so this time we can be sure of getting none that are addled, and none that contain half-hatched chickens," observed Sneyd. "That's a great convenience."

"It would be av we intended to make a stay here."

"And why shouldn't we? They'd never dare to try and storm the position by the waterfall again."

"No, honest man, I'll grant yez that. But what 'ud yez say av the tables was turned? What av they climbed the cliffs above this little flat, an' began heavin' rocks down on us? How should we take the bombardment, eh? 'Twould be our turn then to look foolish, I'm thinkin'."

"True enough. What a dolt I was not think of it. But it never occurred to me that these rocks could be scaled from the other side."

"P'raps they can't," O'Neill allowed. "But it wouldn't be wise to stay here on the chance of that same."

"It will be hard work getting out."

"'Twill. But we must do't, for all that. Luckily climbin' comes by nature to us sailor men; an' as Norah's pretty nimble, too, we ought to make a good shy at it. I'll grant yez it's not aisy to see which way we'll have to go from here; but we must hope to find out as we get higher up."

Taking with them as many hard-baked eggs as they could carry, they set off on the arduous climb, as soon as their meal was finished. The rain had ceased, but the gale still tore up the rocky valley and whistled round the crags with remorseless force. Overhead, the sky was thatched with leaden scurrying clouds.

Around, all was grey and cheerless. The little party of fugitives clambered up the steep ascent, foot by foot. The going was terribly bad. Often they had to make a long détour to get round a precipice, whose sheer front offered no foothold whatever. And more than once, being brought to a dead standstill, they were obliged to retrace their own steps, and try for a more feasible route.

But the avalanche of rock was kept up with unremitting zeal.

Whither this blind retreat would lead them they knew not. The mountains were barren in the extreme. There was not so much as a piece of lichen to clothe their bare and cheerless sides. But away up amongst those rocky fortresses, which were hidden in the grey cloud-vapour, they hoped to find a temporary asylum, where they would be quite secure from the prying eyes of bloodthirsty cannibals. So, with torn hands and blistered feet they struggled on, helping the woman with tender care, making light of the difficulties to be faced, and keeping up her spirits as best they could.

They got amongst the clouds soon after gaining the summit of the rocks above their last resting-place; and with the view circumscribed to twenty yards, they were often in danger of blundering terribly, if not fatally. But they couldn't halt and, holding on in blind confidence that Providence, which had not deserted them so far, would still continue to stick by their side, finally got through the

clammy belt of mist, and breathed the clear crisp air of the mountain-top.

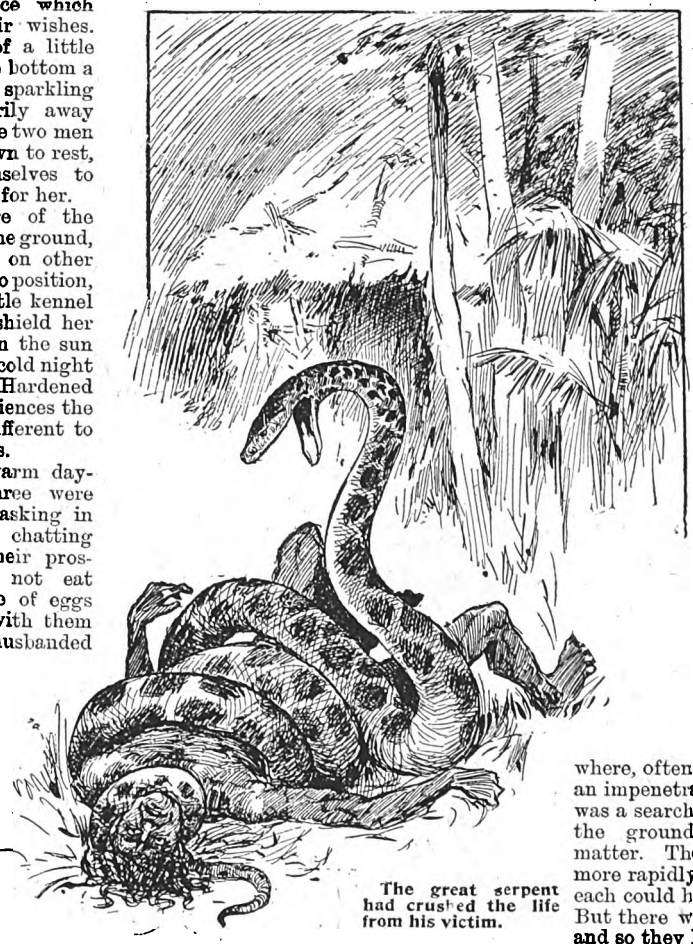
Below, there was a vast, smooth, moving sea of woolly, white vapour, stretching in all directions as far as the eye could reach, till it met the dark-blue vault of the heavens, which was unflecked with traces of other cloud. Mountain peaks still rose jagged and steep above them, but as Sneyd remarked, there was no necessity to climb higher. "We must just hunt about for some secluded cranny where we can make a sheltered camp, and then set ourselves down and make things as comfortable as we can under the circumstances."

Not inclined to be over-fastidious, it did not take them long to find a place which accorded with their wishes. It was on the side of a little ravine, down whose bottom a slender rill of cool sparkling water tinkled merrily away over the stones. The two men made Norah lie down to rest, and then set themselves to build a rude shelter for her.

Taking advantage of the natural features of the ground, they piled boulders on other boulders already into position, and soon had a little kennel made that would shield her from the gusts when the sun went down, and the cold night air chilled them. Hardened by their past experiences the two men were indifferent to exposure themselves.

But while the warm daylight lasted, all three were very comfortable basking in the sunshine, and chatting hopefully about their prospects. They did not eat heavily. The store of eggs they had brought with them was small, and if husbanded to the utmost, could not last more than a couple of days. It would not do to make them spin out longer. They could not afford to grow weak through too great an insufficiency of food. After these were consumed, they must raid the lower country for fresh supplies. The mountain peaks were barren of food. The only thing they offered which would help to support life was water, and although that was in superabundant quantity, they could not nourish their bodies on it alone.

"We are quite safe from the Dajians here," Sneyd said, after they had stayed there the two days, and consumed the last of their eggs. "They could not possibly follow our tracks. And a haphazard search amongst these endless hills would be absurd. Well supplied with food, we could lie snug here, till we one and all died of sheer old age. But that's just the rub. The food's run out, and starvation's as cruel an enemy as cannibals. The only question is, where are we to get the supplies from? For some reason best known to themselves, the gulls seem to have avoided all the valleys we tried yesterday. That's a nuisance, for their eggs are very tolerable feeding."



The great serpent had crushed the life from his victim.

The clouds had cleared away, and the lower wooded parts of the island lay stretched out like a profile map below them.

"It seems pretty aisy goin' to the head of that glen yonder," said O'Neill, pointing the direction he meant with outstretched arm. "You and I might slip cautiously down, an' see av we can't lift something or other. We should come across plantains, or bananas, or oranges, or something o' that kind, an' av we don't, we must just go on till we find a yam garden or a taro patch, an' take our chance o' raidin' that widout being dropped upon."

"Very well," said Sneyd, "we'll just tell Norah, and start off at once,"—both of which they did.

Judging from their experiences of the adjacent island of Erma, the two confidently expected that when once they had descended to the level of the "timber line," they would have but little trouble in finding fruit-trees which would readily supply their wants. But as I have said before, Daji was not so favoured as Erma. Food did not grow on every bush. And every clump of palms, every thicket of plantains, every grove of orange trees, had its special owner, who jealously cared for his precious property.

The two Europeans walked rapidly down the bare mountain slopes, scrutinising the tree tops below them in hopes of spotting the familiar foliage of some clump of fruit trees. But being unsuccessful in this cursory search, they passed through the outlying scattered scrub, and plunged into the thick matted forest beyond.

Their progress was of necessity slow, for the undergrowth was rank and stony, and the rattans and lianes which were present everywhere, often bound the trees together into an impenetrable wall. But as their object was a search, and not a rapid passage over the ground, this did not particularly matter. They could have done their work more rapidly had they separated, for then each could have quartered a separate beat. But there were many reasons against this, and so they kept together.

The work was very hot. Little sunlight got through the matted crests of the trees, it is true, but the virgin ground was pulpy underneath, half swamp, half slime-pit. There rose up a thick steam, which no breath of wind could get at to blow away. The air was close and sultry, filled with a foul odour of decaying vegetation, heavy on the lungs. A great monitor lizard, on whose back Sneyd had inadvertently trodden, wriggled away from underneath him. He halted and shuddered involuntarily. "We might find eels in this filthy place," he said, "but not plantains."

"It's gettin' worse too," observed O'Neill. "We shall be comin' in amongst mangrove bushes next."

"We must move away in a fresh direction. The only question is, which? I have lost my bearings altogether. There isn't a breath of wind to guide one, or anything."

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"We must just sthrike out an' try to find higher ground. Stay a minute, I'll nip aloft, and take a look round."

The Irishman circled the stem of a tall cottonwood tree with a length of rattan, and climbed it native fashion, till he got amongst the branches. Then putting his impromptu rope on a place of safety in readiness for the descent, he ran up the natural steps with a sailor's nimbleness, and disappeared amongst the foliage.

Presently he scrambled back again, and slipping down the smooth trunk at a pace that was scarcely compatible with safety, stood on the oozy soil beside his companion.

"What is it?" Sneyd asked, seeing from the other's face that there was something of considerable moment in the wind.

The Irishman had already turned off, and was tearing recklessly through the undergrowth as fast as his giant strength would let him. "Come along, or we'll be too late. It's close here. You'll see when we get there."

The communication was mysterious, but Sneyd knew his companion would not act as he was doing without a full and sufficient reason. So he followed without demur, and helped to tear aside the interlacing plants that barred their mutual progress.

Panting with their efforts, half stifled with the rank moist heat, bone-weary both of them, they struggled on and on, till at last exhaustion brought O'Neill, iron-muscled though he was, to an involuntary halt.

"Is it much further?" Sneyd demanded.

"Unless I've lost me bearings, we should be almost on it now."

"It—what?"

"A wee clearing. There's——"

"Never mind telling any more. Let me come to the front. I've got a bit of go left in me still for an emergency."

So Lawrence Sneyd fought the tangle of plant stems with all his remaining strength, and just as he, too, was coming to an involuntary halt, he saw through the thick foliage of a flowering bush an open space close ahead of him. Thrusting aside the intervening leaves, his glance fell on a sight that nearly froze him with horror. Before a small and squalid hut was a native tightly wrapped in the glistening folds of a huge anaconda. The great serpent had crushed the life from his victim, and was preparing to devour him. As Sneyd looked, the two massive jaws with their rows of instanding teeth opened, and approached the prey.

Fascinated by the sight of the reptile, he had up to this moment scarcely noticed anything besides. But his gaze fell on the victim just as the head was being sucked down.

Great heavens! Those bleared eyes glaring with an unnatural stare, and sensuous nostril, that cruel mouth. It was Ebry's, their enemy Ebry, by whose treachery they had fallen into the hands of the Dajians.

(To be continued.)

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME.

WITHOUT doubt there are many readers of *S.S.* who heartily sympathise with the FRESH AIR FUND, but are unable to subscribe to it. It is now possible for them to do so, for everybody must use soap. To help the Fund, Messrs. Jeyes' Sanitary Compounds Company Limited, have promised to hand over a farthing on every 2½d. bar of their "Fresh Air" soap sold in the United Kingdom during the current year. It can be had from the vendors of such commodities all over the country. But if any of our readers experience difficulty in getting supplies, they should write to the Company, at 64 Cannon Street, London, E.C.

LADIES WHO PLAY

any instrument, and who have a liking for music, may turn their ability to good account by reading the article on "Ladies Orchestras" in PEARSON'S WEEKLY, dated March 11th, 1899.

During the coming summer months there will be ample opportunities for giving indoor and open-air concerts, not only in inland towns and villages, but on the coast, and the writer of this article shows the way to go to work.

WHO IS YOUR DOUBLE?

AMONGST the many, many thousands of readers of *P. W.*, there are surely several who very closely resemble one another, and I want to find out who they are. For this purpose I am going to ask you to send in your photograph to this office, and I shall give a sovereign to each of the five pairs of competitors who look most alike—£10 in all.

It will be a very interesting thing to you to find whether there is any person who weekly peruses the same pages as yourself and who bears a strong facial resemblance to you. This you can now find out by sending in your photograph.

The competition will remain open until Monday, March 20th, and all attempts must be sent in envelopes marked "LIKENESS."

If the photographs are to be returned, each must be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope sufficiently large to carry them. Under no circumstances will they be returned if stamps alone are sent. While every endeavour will be made to guard against loss or damage, the Editor does not make himself responsible for either.

NOT ONE MAN IN A THOUSAND

has a library worth speaking of. The difficulty of obtaining good books at a nominal price has been, in the past, unsurmountable. Tens of thousands of men and women have stocked their brains with knowledge obtained from books that have been borrowed from lending libraries, or from friends. How many of these tens of thousands ever thought that the day would come when they would be able to obtain for a weekly payment of 5s.—extending over a few months—one hundred of the most famous books ever given to the world? Yet this is what we are offering you to-day, and although, figuratively speaking, we shall be offering you this to-morrow, we cannot promise—so large has been the demand and so great the tax on our resources—that we shall be offering you this the day after to-morrow. In short, we would strongly urge you to decide as rapidly as possible, whether you will or will not entertain the idea of taking advantage of this truly excellent offer. Perhaps, though, you have not the list by you. If this is the case a postcard will bring one along by return of post, together with all the necessary particulars. Anyway, a halfpenny postcard won't break you, and the list is worth keeping among your papers for reference.

Meanwhile, we would ask you to bear in mind the all-important fact that

Go North, or South, or East, or West,
You can't improve the Hundred Best.

All communications to be made to "Best Books Department," C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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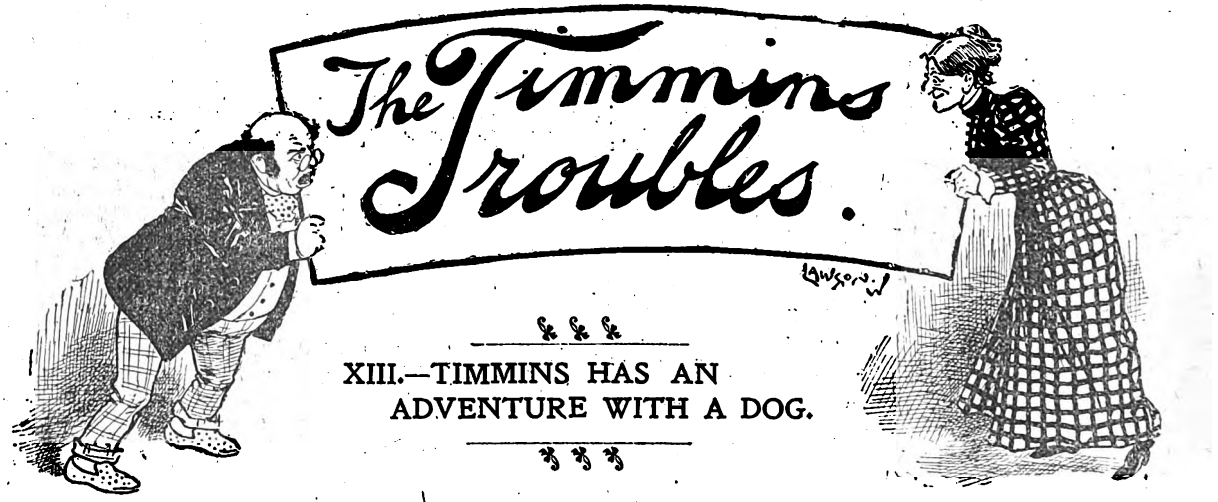

XIII.—TIMMINS HAS AN ADVENTURE WITH A DOG.

"Look here, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, as he led a huge and shaggy dog into his wife's room, "I've got a dog a friend of mine gave me. What do you think of him?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Timmins, mounting a chair in dismay. "Is he mad?"

"No, Mrs. Timmins," retorted her husband. "he not only is not mad, but he isn't a step-ladder either, nor a bird's eye view. He's a dog, and if you don't get down off that chair he'll probably bite your leg off."

Mrs. Timmins got down on her feet and eyed the brute with some trepidation.

"Maybe he's got the hydrophobia," she suggested, by way of a hearty welcome.

"P'raps he has," agreed Mr. Timmins, "but if he has he's got it in his pocket. Come here, doggee, doggee," and Mr. Timmins snapped his fingers persuasively.

"Why doesn't he come when you call him?" asked Mrs. Timmins, deeply interested in the proceedings.

"Because you make such a noise you scare him," explained Mr. Timmins. "Come, doggee, doggee!"

"I don't quite like the way his tongue hangs out," objected Mrs. Timmins. "It doesn't look natural."

"Maybe you don't like the way his tail hangs out, either. P'raps you think that's artificial, too. With your information about dogs you only need a tiled floor and a broken hinge to be a dog pound. Keep quiet, now, while I teach him some tricks. Come here, doggee! Sit up, sir."

The dog stretched out his forelegs, opened a mouth like a folding bedstead, and growled.

"What makes him do that?" asked Mrs. Timmins, sitting on the back of the chair with her feet in the seat.

"Why?" shrieked Mr. Timmins. "Who do you suppose made him do it? Do you think he works on a wire? Have you got a notion that he goes by steam? He doesn't. I tell you he's alive, and he does it because that's the bent of his mind. What are you sitting up there for? Can't you see he doesn't like it? Now you sit still. Here, doggee, doggee, good doggee, sit up and beg!" and Mr. Timmins held up an admonitory finger.

The dog eyed Mr. Timmins with anything but an assuring glance.

"He's hungry," suggested Mrs. Timmins. "Dogs do like that when they want to be taken down the yard and fed."

"Of course you know," grumbled Mr. Timmins. "All you want is perfect ignorance on the part of the police to be a dog-fight. Got anything in the house for him to eat?"

"There's some cold stew and a piece of custard."

"That's it!" raved Mr. Timmins. "That's what's the matter with the dog. He wants custard. You've got it. You only need a committee and a fight over the proceeds to be a dog show. Where's the custard? Haven't you got some cold coffee? Give him a lemon to stay his stomach!" and Mr. Timmins jumped straight up into the air and landed on the dog. The dog made for the open air with a howl, and Mr. Timmins gathered himself up and looked after his prize.

"Never mind, my dear," said Mrs. Timmins soothingly. "he'll come back."

"If he does, I'll kill him!" shouted Mr. Timmins. "See what you've done? You've made me lose my dog and tear my trousers. Is there anything more about dogs you don't know? Have you got any more intelligence to impart about dogs? All you want is a bucket of brandy round your neck and a snowstorm to be a monk of St. Bernard," with which logical conclusion Mr. Timmins began exploring his outlying districts for possible bites, while his wife speculated upon the salvation of the cold stew and the custard by the sudden and eminently satisfactory disappearance of the dog.

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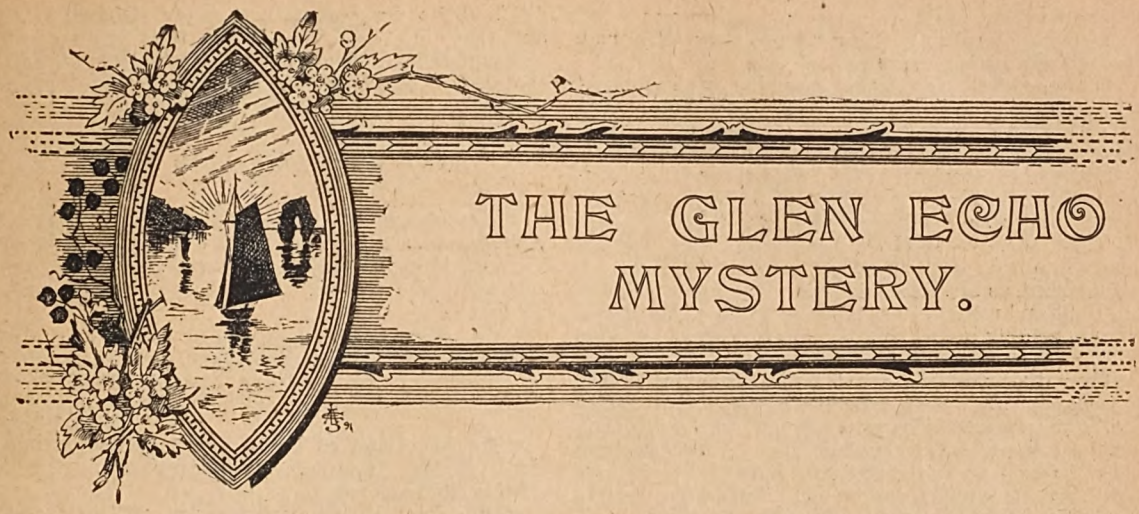

THE GLEN ECHO MYSTERY.

Six months ago, through the death of a kinsman in the north of England, a lot of old pictures, furniture, *bric-à-brac* and papers came into my possession. Most of these were stored away in the garret of my house. One day, having occasion to go to the storeroom, my attention was attracted to an old-fashioned, battered leather trunk.

I had often thought of satisfying my curiosity as to its contents, but had never been able to find a key that would fit the lock. This day, however, it occurred to me that the ancient leather contrivance was of no value, and that a knife would do quite as well as a key; so I whipped out my pocket-knife and ripped a long slit in the leather top.

Within I found a large number of packets of old letters, account books and diaries, and all sorts of manuscripts and pamphlets.

All these I tumbled out on the floor, and looked through them in an idle way. At first I found nothing of unusual interest; but soon I came to a packet of peculiar shape.

It was apparently a sort of home-made envelope, composed of two pieces of old-fashioned blue linen paper folded and glued together. Upon the face of the packet was inscribed these words:

STRICTLY PRIVATE.

Never to be opened by anyone but me.

HENRY STONE.

This was the signature of my dead kinsman, and I suppose I should have respected his injunction; but I did not.

My curiosity was stronger than my reverence for the dead, so I slit open the packet.

Now I wish I had not done so. By prying into the secrets of the past, accidently placed within my keeping, I had come face to face with a mystery which appals me. For days and days and nights and nights I have turned it over in my mind, have looked at it from every point of view, have analysed, searched, thought, imagined. But it has been all in vain. I am completely baffled. So are my friends to whom I have submitted the matter. Our combined ingenuity fail to afford a solution.

What I found within the packet of old blue linen paper was simply the following three cuttings from newspapers of long ago:

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE AT GLEN ECHO.

"POUGHKEEPSIE, Oct. 20.—The police officials here and detectives from Chicago are unable to throw any light upon the mysterious disappearance of Sylvester Baldwin from the house of our esteemed fellow-townsman, Professor Edwin Stone, who lives in the old Stone Manor House, at Glen Echo, one of the picturesque suburbs of this city. Mr. Baldwin strangely disappeared last Sunday night, and though diligent search has been made for him during the the forty-eight hours that have elapsed, not a single clue has been obtained.

"Mr. Baldwin's home is in England. He came about two weeks ago to visit Professor Stone, who was his classmate at Cambridge. He was about twenty-five years of age, and a rising young lawyer. Mr. Baldwin was unmarried, but it is whispered that he has become engaged since his arrival here.

"Almost every day the guests had indulged in picnics, boating excursions, fishing, horseback-riding, and other amusements. Mr Baldwin was the life of the party with his vivacity, wit, and love of fun.

"On many of these excursions it was impossible for Professor Stone to go, as it is well known that in his laboratory, located on the roof of the Manor house, he is carrying on some important experiments. When he felt compelled to remain in his workshop, Professor Stone designated Mr. Baldwin to act as his representative in the entertainment of the party.

"Sunday last the ladies and gentlemen, accompanied by Professor Stone's aged mother, with whom he lives, attended divine service in the morning, and spent the afternoon in walks and drives.

"Toward evening, the weather growing colder, they all assembled in the big dining hall, where they made a rousing log fire in the old-fashioned fireplace. They had refreshments and music, and Mr. Baldwin's fine baritone voice was never heard to better advantage.

"About ten o'clock, after planning their excursion for the next day, all retired to their rooms on the second floor.

"Mr. Baldwin was heard by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and

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by Miss Davidge, guests who occupied adjoining rooms, to enter his chamber a few moments after they had reached their own apartments.

"He was whistling softly and humming an air, indicating the happy condition of his mind. He was also heard closing a window, and closing and latching the outside blinds.

"Between the apartment of Mr. Baldwin and that occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jones there is a door, somewhat warped by time, and through the cracks and the big, old-fashioned keyhole Mr. Jones heard Mr. Baldwin bounce into bed; but as the light in his room was not extinguished, as Mr. Jones noticed when he put out his own light and retired, the supposition is that Mr. Baldwin was reading in bed before going to sleep, as was his habit.

"From that moment not the slightest trace of the young lawyer has been secured. The last known about him, he was apparently lying in bed, reading, a happy man. Next morning he was not in his room. All his clothing and effects, save only the pyjamas which he wore as a night robe, were in the apartment. He had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him.

"It is inconceivable that Mr. Baldwin suffered an attack of mental aberration and wandered away, for there had been a light fall of snow that evening and no tracks were found in it round the house. The barn and outbuildings, as well as every nook and cranny of the manor house, were carefully searched. The police looked under the hayricks, and even lowered a man into the wells.

"They scoured the country around, but no one had seen or heard of a man wandering about in his pyjamas. If Mr. Baldwin left the house, he went away without shoes, hat, or clothing; and as cold weather has prevailed since his disappearance, it is almost inconceivable that he has not been obliged to apply for shelter or food during the last forty-eight hours.

"The detectives do not believe that Mr. Baldwin left the house. The morning after his disappearance the shutters in his room were all found fastened on the inside. So, too, were the front door and the rear or kitchen door of the house. All were locked with the keys in place inside. The detectives have satisfied themselves that the fall of snow on Sunday evening ceased about nine o'clock, and it would have been impossible for Mr. Baldwin to wander away, or be carried away, without leaving traces of footsteps.

"But neither Mr. Baldwin living nor Mr. Baldwin dead is to be found in the house now. The search has been thorough from cellar to garret. Professor Stone's laboratory upon the roof has been thoroughly ransacked. As is known to our citizens, Professor Stone is engaged in investigations in connection with a new illuminating process and also in the water-proofing of fabrics. For these purposes he keeps upon the roof quite a collection of apparatus, retorts, gas generators, a large lot of fabric, some of which has been chemically treated, tools, fine instruments, etc. Professor Stone says he was in his laboratory hard at work the night his friend disappeared. No other member of the family or any of the guests heard Mr. Baldwin's steps that fateful night. Professor Stone insisted that the detectives should thoroughly search his laboratory. The officers opened the gas machines, sifted the cinders in all the retorts and overhauled all the piles of fabric. They found not the slightest trace of the missing man, dead or alive.

"Professor Stone and all the members of his house party, so merry a few days ago, are bowed down with grief. They not only fear that Mr. Baldwin is dead, but they are overwhelmed by the mystery which surrounds them. They feel that they are living within the shadow of a tragedy which has not been explained and which thus far is wholly inexplicable."

"MYSTERY PILED UPON MYSTERY.

"Poughkeepsie, October 22nd.—The mystery of the disappearance of Silvester Baldwin is not yet cleared up. In fact, it grows deeper and darker. This morning a telegram was received from Saratoga. It read as follows:—

Chief of Police, Poughkeepsie.—Body of man in night-clothes found last Monday morning at daylight by a mail carrier on bridle-path in the Adirondacks about one hundred miles from here. What was date of your man's disappearance?

City Marshal.

"To this, Chief of Police Kipley replied, giving the date of Mr. Baldwin's disappearance, and adding: 'Impossible same man.'

"Of course, it is impossible, and yet it is a most strange and striking coincidence. Have two men disappeared in their pyjamas during the past week? This most extraordinary development did not impress Chief Kipley as having any bearing upon the Baldwin case. When asked if there could possibly be any connection between the two incidents he replied:—

"'It is absurd to think there was. Mr. Baldwin disappeared after ten o'clock on Sunday night. Early next morning the body of a man was found in the Adirondacks, two hundred miles from here. There is no railway nearer than Saratoga. It is a journey of about two days from the place where the body was found to the nearest railway station, and that is by mounted courier. A waggon would need four days over these rough roads. It was a physical impossibility for the body of Mr. Baldwin to be carried to that remote point in the Adirondacks by next morning, and, therefore, we do not need to discuss this phase of the case any farther. The body found in the mountains is that of some other man.'

"Chief Kipley is undoubtedly right. Your reporter has ascertained that the only train for the north after Mr. Baldwin retired to his room was the midnight express, which does not make connections at Albany or Saratoga. The earliest possible arrival at Saratoga would have been at ten o'clock on Monday morning, and that is still one hundred miles by a rough mountain road from the place where the body was found, according to the telegram, at daylight on Monday morning.

"Notwithstanding the utter impossibility of there being any connection between the two incidents, Miss Davidge, who has taken much to heart the strange fate of Mr. Baldwin, has insisted that careful investigation be made of the Adirondack case. In this she is supported by Professor Stone, and by others at Glen Echo house. Their anxiety is so great that they grasp at straws. Chief Kipley, to humour their strange whim, has agreed to send a man to the mountains to inquire carefully into the finding of the body there, though protesting that it is useless expense and trouble.

"Chief Kipley is still convinced, as are all the detectives who have worked on the case, that Mr. Baldwin, living or dead, is still in the manor house. He has expressed his belief to Professor Stone, and the latter has insisted on a more thorough search. In consequence, the old house has been nearly pulled to pieces. Partitions have been cut down, floors ripped up, walls opened,

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the floor of the cellar dug up, and the ashes and cinders in every furnace and stove, including the retorts in Professor Stone's laboratory, have been subjected to chemical analysis by Professors Tausig and Brunier, of the Polytechnic School. The barns and outbuildings, strawstacks and wells, have all been researched. Every scrap of paper in Mr. Baldwin's room has been scrutinised. All the inmates of the house have been subjected to another examination, but without disclosing any new facts. Not a single trace of Mr. Baldwin or of the manner in which he left or was taken from his room, not even a shadow of a clue, has been discovered."

MR. BALDWIN'S BODY FOUND.

An Astounding Case.

"Saratoga, October 26th.—The body found in the Adirondacks a week ago this morning was that of Silvester Baldwin, after all. It has been positively identified by Professor Stone, Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Miss Irene Davidge, who came here to view it, accompanied by your reporter. But instead of clearing up the mystery, this discovery has darkened it into one of the most inexplicable crimes of the century.

"All we know now is that Mr. Baldwin is dead; that he disappeared from his room in the manor house at Glen Echo after ten o'clock on Sunday night, the 8th inst.; that his body was found at daylight next morning 200 miles away, a 100 miles from the nearest railway; and that he must have been fouly murdered.

"Detective Brown, who was sent by Chief Kipley to investigate the Adirondack case, reached Saratoga last Friday morning, and by hard riding over the mountain roads arrived at Cascadeville on Saturday evening. There he found the body, which had been brought in from a point eight miles north. Mr. Brown closely questioned the mail-carrier who had found the body about six o'clock Monday morning, on his way from Lake Placid. There was no doubt as to the day and hour, as these were attested by the mail carrier and others.

"When Givins came upon the body it was lying in the road. His horse was frightened by it. The remains lay in a sort of heap, and were not yet quite cold.

"The skull was smashed, the neck broken, and the head driven into the shoulders. Many bones in the body and limbs were broken, indicating that the remains may have been tightly packed in a box or crammed into a cask.

"The only clothing upon the corpse was a suit of silken pyjamas, tied around the waist with a cord of the same material.

"The deceased had never been seen in that region, nor was any one known to be missing. The population is sparse, and every tourist and sportsman is known along the trails to the guides, boatmen, and innkeepers. No man could carry a human body to that remote spot save on the back of a horse, and no mysterious horseman or other person was reported from any part of the district.

"The manner in which the body has made its appearance in the midst of the mountains was as much of a mystery to the people there as the means by which it had been removed from Poughkeepsie was to Detective Brown.

"Detective Brown had known Mr. Baldwin, and as soon as he saw the body he was convinced of its identity. Accordingly he sent a messenger with a telegram to Chief Kipley, and hired two men and two horses to help him to carry the remains to Saratoga. They arrived here at three o'clock this afternoon, and there was a sad scene when our party from Poughkeepsie were admitted to the undertaker's rooms to view the body. Everyone at once recognised in the broken and mangled mass of flesh, handsome, manly, Silvester Baldwin. Professor Stone was greatly agitated when he beheld the features of his college chum and best friend, and Miss Davidge uttered a cry of pain and would have swooned had not Mrs. Jones led her away.

"The face of the deceased is natural. In one of the front teeth is a gold filling just such as Mr. Baldwin had in one of his front teeth. The silken pyjamas are precisely like Mr. Baldwin's, and, moreover, his initials, 'S. B.,' are embroidered upon a little linen tag under the neck. The name of the maker, a Boston firm, is there, too. Still stronger proof of the identity of the remains, if any were needed, is found in the fact that in a pocket of the pajamas was discovered a locket containing the miniature of Miss Irene Davidge.

"There is, therefore, not the slightest doubt whatever, that this is the body of Silvester Baldwin. There can be no doubt either, that he was murdered. But how and by whom? And above all, how was his body carried in six or seven hours, some two hundred miles from his room in the manor house at Glen Echo to that lonely spot in the mountains, to reach which a journey of two days is required, even under the most favourable circumstances?

"It cannot be possible that the body which we have here is that of another man. It is beyond reason to suppose that there was a simultaneous disappearance of two men, both wearing silken pyjamas alike, the two men resembling one another in figure, face, colour of eyes and hair, teeth and everything as closely as if they were twins, both bearing the initials "S. B." and both carrying in their pockets a minature of Miss Irene Davidge, of New York.

"Every one is greatly depressed, not only on account of Mr. Baldwin's sad fate, but by the inexplicable mystery surrounding the dreadful tragedy. The doctors and the professors who have carefully examined the body and subjected part of its raiment to microscopic tests are without any explanation, however shadowy and unsatisfactory. Have the Black Arts been revived, or must we ascribe this extraordinary tragedy to the working of some modern miracle?"

This is the strange story my curiosity had unearthed from the recesses of my dead kinsman's trunk. You will now see why I am sorry I disobeyed the injunction which I found written upon the blue packet. The tale which these old newspaper clippings tell has wrung in my ears and whirled about in my brain, robbing me of sleep and making me nervous and restless. I have searched the old trunk again and again for further light upon it, but without success. I have had a feeling that somehow or other I must discover the dread secret, for this tragedy was in my family. Not only did it occur, or at least have its beginning, in the house of my kinsman, but, now that the circumstances have been brought so strikingly to my attention, I recall that my relation, Professor Stone, married the Miss Davidge who figures in the story, lived with her in happiness for many years, and reared a fine family of boys and girls. Though I had never known either Professor Stone or his wife, Mr. Henry Stone, their brother, who left to my charge the fateful trunk, has told me of the professor's successful and useful career and happy home life.

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But all my efforts have been unavailing. I am unable to find a clue or even to evolve a satisfactory theory. I can only give my readers the facts and leave them to struggle with the problem, as I have struggled.

Postscript: "The foregoing was written some months ago. Meanwhile I have made strenuous efforts to throw off the strange fascination which this mystery has exerted over me—to stop thinking and worrying over it; but to no purpose. It has continued to harass me. To-day, feeling more desperate than usual, I went up to the garret with a hatchet and a big knife, determined to cut the old trunk to pieces in order to discover if its shell contained any clue to the mystery. Underneath the lining in the bottom I found a letter, apparently no more than five or six years old, and dating from Scotland, which read as follows:

"My dear brother Henry:—I am writing this letter to you with my own hand, despite my physical weakness. It is the last letter I shall ever write to you, for I know my end is fast approaching. The doctor tells me I shall recover, but he cannot deceive me.

"I have, as you know, led a busy, useful, and successful life. My inventions have brought me distinction and reward. There is only one thing in my career which I regret, and even that does not fill me with remorse. Once there came to me a moment in which all that life seemed to promise me—all happiness, success, and ambition—were involved in a struggle for mastery between two men—myself and another.

"It is the law of nature that when two forces come into collision the weaker must give way. Nature has thus established the principle of the survival of the fittest, the dominance of the superior over the inferior. It matters not whether the struggle comes between planets or molecules, men or animals, nations or tribes, the law is the same. No man can be above the law of his being and his surroundings; it is his right and his duty to work out his salvation within his sphere and under the principles which nature has ordained.

"And yet in my case that which I had to do was extremely disagreeable. I had to remove a man from my pathway. One or the other had to suffer a most grievous loss, a fatal disappointment; and when this clash of interests came I had the right, under nature's laws, to defend myself. The man whose life crossed mine, and whom it was necessary for me to remove, was my best friend, and, for the moment, my guest. These circumstances added to the unpleasantness of my task, but did not deprive me of my right of self-preservation—a right which exists in every living thing, from the humblest to the highest, and whose exercise nature restricts only with limitations of power.

"You may wonder, brother, why I write these words. I write them because it is not in my nature to die with my secret untold. All these years I have carried it alone, absolutely alone. An impulse which I can neither describe nor control leads me to share my secret with just one human soul; and of course he can be none but you, my dearest friend and brother, who has shared all his secrets with me.

"You will recall all the circumstances of the tragedy which happened at our house in Glen Echo shortly after I left college, and while you were in Europe. We have often talked them over in the past, and you, like everyone else, tried to solve the mystery. If you had only known what I knew!

"I loved Irene Davidge before Silvester Baldwin did. Before he and she met at our house I was passionately devoted to her. I made up the house party for the purpose of providing a good opportunity to press my suit, which I knew was not unpleasing. Before she returned home I had confidently expected she would be my promised wife. But from the first day that she met Baldwin I knew my star was setting and his was in the ascendant. He was rapid and prosperous in his love-making, and I was forgotten. In a week they were lovers. One day I saw him kiss her as they stood behind some rose bushes in the garden. Had I not been a philosopher, a man of cool, calm reasoning, I should have killed him there and then.

"But you know my self-possession, my absolute control of self, my favourite theory that he who can master himself can master the world. All that night I reasoned it out with myself. My conclusions, which to me then, as now, appeared logical, were as follows:

"1. Without her my life is ruined, as I know myself well enough to know I shall never love again.

"2. If he lives she will be his, and I, the superior man in all, save those superficial qualities which attract the other sex, shall be the loser in life's battle.

"3. Nature has ordained that the superior shall triumph, and therefore I have the right to remove him from my way.

"4. If I do remove him, in proper fashion, she will be mine, as she would have been mine had he not come between us. Therefore his removal will give me that which I must have.

"Conclusion: I will remove him.

"Action being determined upon, it only remained to decide the means. It was necessary that everything should be done in a prudent and orderly way. There must be no danger of discovery or even of suspicion being fastened upon me, for of course that would defeat the purpose in view. To obviate the possibility of pain or humiliation to our dead mother, or to you, my brother, was as much my duty as to protect the mind of Miss Davidge from being poisoned against me. Therefore, it was necessary to proceed only after thorough consideration of all the possibilities. A minor point, but still one worthy of attention, was that I should not be compelled to do any actual butchering with my own hands, nor have any gruesome scenes about me. Even in this supreme moment, when I was successfully to work out my destiny or utterly ruin myself, I could not overlook the fact that I was a gentleman. Nor could I take the risk of employing a confederate.

"In a few hours my plans were laid. I hope you will agree with me that they were laid with judgement, skill, and thoroughness, as became a man of science and self-possession. Fortunately I had in my laboratory all the materials needed for my operations. But there was much work to do. Day and night I toiled up there on the roof of the old house, where you and I afterwards passed so many happy hours while perfecting my inventions. I absented myself as much as possible from the house party, in part because I could not endure seeing him and her together, and in part because I needed all the time for my preparations. During a period of one hundred hours I took only as much sleep as one ordinarily gets in twenty-four.

"At last I was ready. I remember that it was Sunday noon, just after services, that I tested my work, reviewed all my calculations, and found nothing had been neglected. After dinner in the evening I spent some time with the party in the dining-room, and the loving glances exchanged between Silvester and Irene were

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more endurable to me than they had hitherto been. Excusing myself about nine o'clock, I went upstairs. Entering Baldwin's room, I struck a match and found the book which he was engaged in reading. It was 'Horace's Odes,' from my library. I knew Silvester's habit of reading an hour before going to sleep—he formed it in college. Opening the volume to the bookmark, I turned over six pages and inserted there this note which I had prepared.

"'Dear Silvester:—If you are not too sleepy when you find this, come up to the laboratory. I have something important to show you.

E. S.'

"I calculated that it would take him a quarter of an hour to read from his bookmark to my note, and I felt sure he would come, as he had displayed much interest in my experiments, and had complained because of late I had admitted him so rarely to the laboratory. My only fear was that, in the time which I had given him, not all of the other people in the house would be asleep, as I naturally did not want anyone to know he had visited me. At the same time I dared not have placed the note farther on in the book, lest he should not reach it before falling asleep himself. Of course I could have deferred the removal till another night, but now wind and weather favoured, and I courted no delay.

"He came a few moments before eleven o'clock. I was ready for him.

"'Silvester,' said I, 'here is a machine I have built for experimental purposes, and I want you to help me test it.'

"'All right, Edwin,' he replied; 'what is it now?'

"'A new gas-holder, made of silk,' said I, 'and here is some of the new gas. Take a good whiff of it—it is like wine in the nostrils.'

"He took the metal flask which I handed him, turned the cock, and in a moment or two fell insensible at my feet. I had filled the flask with a combination of chloroform and hydrogen, under pressure, and when the cock was turned a cloud of most powerful anæsthetic fumes burst into his face.

"Now I was master of the situation. First I locked the door leading to the floor below. I noted with satisfaction that he had brought my note with him, thus saving me a perilous trip down to his room after it. I burned it in my furnace. A look at the anemometer showed a wind movement of thirty miles an hour, and I was glad to see that the barometer was still falling. If it had been possible for a man of my temperament to have faltered in a set purpose, the sight of the locket containing Irene's portrait which had fallen from the breast pocket of his pyjamas as he fell, would have served to have nerved me for my task.

"With your knowledge of thoroughgoing methods, dear brother, you will easily imagine how carefully I had planned everything. Sylvester's exact weight I had ascertained by a casual inquiry a few days before to be one hundred and sixty-two pounds. I assumed that he would come to me without stopping to dress, for he was hardy and athletic, and proud of his ability to endure exposure—an important point on account of the nicety of my calculations. The weight of the gas-bag was eighteen pounds; total, one hundred and eighty pounds, and of its lines and netting, five pounds; total, one hundred and eighty-five pounds. By careful test I had found the weight of my gas—it was nearly pure, dry hydrogen—was eighty thousandths of an ounce per cubic foot; and as air weighs one and two tenths ounces per foot, I had a net power of fully one and one tenth ounces per foot. The gas-bag was spherical, and a little more than eighteen feet in diameter, giving it a capacity of three thousand one hundred and fifty cubic feet, equal to two hundred and seventeen pounds lifting force.

"It was necessary to have a little margin, to compensate for loss of gas by leakage. Careful calculations of the rarity of the atmosphere at various altitudes showed me the bag with the burden would at first ascend to a height of about five thousand six hundred feet, where there would be an exact counterbalance of the weight of air displaced and the weight of the apparatus and its burden. Then it would slowly descend as the gas escaped from the bag. It was, of course, desirable that it should at first ascend to a great altitude, as that would prevent it being seen by anyone who might be astir. It was quite as desirable that the whole machine should remain in the air at least six hours, that it might be carried a proper distance away. At the same time, it must drop its burden before daylight—before anyone could see it and perchance understand its dread significance.

"It was highly important too, from my point of view, that the body should be found sooner or later, and be unmistakably identified; otherwise Irene might take it into her pretty head to do the romantic by waiting year after year for the possible re-appearance of her absent lover, which would be decidedly unpleasant for me. Hence I did not dare to arrange to send the apparatus out to sea, as I might easily have done. For the same reason I replaced in the pocket of Silvester's pyjamas the locket with Irene's miniature in it, which had fallen from it.

"It was absolutely necessary that the apparatus and its burden should not be found together, for in that case it would be easy to trace the two to a common source—to wit, my laboratory—thus defeating the purpose in view To obviate this danger I had made careful experiments in the effect of various acids upon fibres, and was able accurately, to determine the time in which a given quantity of diluted vitriolic acid would eat away a cord of given strength so that it would part under the strain of a weight of one hundred and fifty-six pounds. By this means I made sure that the apparatus and its burden should be separated before daylight, and the latter fall to earth, and the former, relieved of its incubus, to ascend to the skies and fly perhaps a thousand miles before coming down.

"Such a cord, twisted with acid and timed to sustain the load just six hours, I tied about the waist of Silvester and made fast to the netting beneath the gas-bag.

"The moment had come. Carefully I looked all about from the roof to see that no one was watching my operations, and noted with satisfaction that the night was extremely dark, and in all respects favourable to my purpose.

"At a quarter past eleven o'clock, Sunday evening, October 18, I took Silvester's living right hand in mine and pressed it with a farewell greeting. Then with three rapid slashes of my knife I cut the guy ropes of my little balloon, with the body of my rival dangling beneath it, darted upward and northward into the gale.

"Your affectionate brother,

"Edwin Stone."

* * * * *

Such was the secret of Silvester Baldwin's death. Was it to be expected that anything less than the diabolical craft and ingenuity that brought it to pass should penetrate the mystery?

Geo. Fenmore.

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THE BELLE OF THE R.M.S. "TREBIZOND."

I.

Plaisir d'amour dure pour un jour,
Chagrin d'amour dure pour la vie.
DU MAURIER (*Trilby*).

"It's a beastly bad bit of business, and the worst of it is a fellow can't do anything in it. Why on earth don't things slide round into their proper places in this world and not go fooling round trying to make square holes fit them when they know they are round?"

With such ill-expressed and badly-worded logic did Niels Barton soliloquise as he paced up and down his little cabin. Honest men are sometimes—nay, very often—slow of speech, and that was the only title Niels Barton claimed from the world. He had traversed every league of its sea and almost every country known; he had formed few ties that it would have caused him a pang to break; seen very few races that did not in some respect resemble his own, especially in their follies and vices.

Niels Barton had no quarrel with the world; he loved it well, but he had learned the approximate value of almost every factor that went to the making of it; learned to see everything in proper proportion, always and excepting one—*woman*.

He had been brought up with a profound respect for the sex, and, shaken as his faith had been in his wanderings, he had not yet lost sight of his ideal. He did not belong to the class of men who "like a woman who's a perfect fool," though he knew there were such and that they had succeeded in manufacturing just the very thing they wanted.

Niels Barton took himself seriously—too seriously, his friends thought—yet they all respected him for it; and it was with his characteristic soberness of mind that he thrashed out the question that now occupied his attention.

That question contained that most perplexing of paradoxes—a *woman*. Not that the one in question was even remotedly connected with his own fate; but another woman was; and that was the reason; so Niels Barton told himself that all women claimed his chivalrous attention.

His musings were interrupted presently by a cheery voice.

"What on earth are you muttering about, Barton?—you, the only optimist aboard as far as I can make out in spite of your solemn old face. Why, one would think you were expecting the Sydney *Mail* to contain the news of the sudden death of all your relations in one fell stroke."

"Talking of the mail, that reminds me, Thornburgh, that I must catch the homeward French packet to-morrow; we shall pass her coming out. You don't mind my being candid, old man, but just now you are in the way. Come in later, will you?"

And with the best of good graces Thornburgh departed, whistling as he went the latest air that had been imported from England.

Hugh Thornburgh was the first refrigerating engineer of the *Trebizond*, the greyhound of the Pacific, and now on her way from Vancouver to Sydney. In spite of (perhaps because of) their wide difference in character he and Barton, the second officer, were such chums.

Barton, to any casual observer, was not handsome. He possessed the Sonata kind of face that required studying to appreciate its beauty. Thornburgh, on the other hand, had what gushing young ladies call "the features of an Adonis."

There were others besides this superficial difference; the chief, perhaps, being that although Barton was three years the younger, Thornburgh possessed one of those boyish dispositions that made one prophecy on the shortest possible acquaintance that he would never be a man, while Barton gave one the impression that he had never been anything else.

It was white suit weather, and the *Trebizond* was only two days off port.

A fortnight since there had been added to the list of passengers—some two hundred odd of varied types of the human family—the Governor of New Zealand, Sir Philip Armstrong, and his only child, Cherith.

Young—she was barely nineteen; pretty—of the wax doll type of beauty; lively and accomplished, Cherith Armstrong was bound to be more than a cipher wherever she went. Needless to say, in her short reign on the *Trebizond*, she had been the cause of much speculation, many heartbreakings.

Among the saloon passengers, which included successful prospectors from Klondyke, Government officials, interesting couples on their honeymoon, intrepid old ladies, lively young ones, consumptive misanthropes, and globe-trotting elder sons, was one of the latter species, who attracted, and, what was more, demanded no little attention.

Hiram Jackson, of Boston and Philadelphia, was a man not to be lightly regarded. "When found make a note of," Captain Cuttle would, no doubt, have observed. Certainly one could hardly help making mental notes on him. His profusion of gold chain, his length of shirt cuff, the size of the check in his tweed suit, the quality of his cigars, and the dollars he spent daily at the first class bar were facts too much in evidence to be passed over.

The officers, most of whom were men of education and culture, got a vast amount of amusement out of him and the patronising airs he assumed towards them. Most of the passengers tolerated him with that air of *bonhomie* one usually finds among passengers on short voyages; a select few pointedly snubbed him; and others treated him with indifference.

Among the latter was Cherith Armstrong. She consented to be amused by him and his inane, vulgar boasting so long as it amused her, but when a winsome, handsome young officer was near Hiram received his *congé*.

Needless to say, this did not meet with his views of the fitness of things, and not long after Thornburgh left Barton to his thoughts and his mail, an interesting, though somewhat one-sided conversation was taking place in the reading room of the *Trebizond*.

Niels finished his letter, lighted his pipe, and commenced to pace his cabin. It was not a cheerful letter that he had written; but he wrote as the mood moved him, and it was a black, or at most a grey one to-day, for he had made a discovery.

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When Cherith Armstrong had come on board there had been a lively discussion by the officers off duty, and all, with the exception of Barton, had been unanimous in giving her the title of the "belle of the ship."

"Oh, it's no use trying to convert an old Benedick like Barton," said Thornburgh, his champion. "He likes a woman with ideas, and I don't think we shall find the belle has any."

And in spite of the changes his mind had undergone in the ten days that followed, Barton was still ignorant of one idea at least that had taken root in her mind, and grown till it was a certainty with her, and that was that she loved Hugh Thornburgh.

It was a well-known fact to all on board that Cherith was on her way to her *fiancé*, the newly-made commissioner of lands and mines for Western Australia, and preparations were in progress for a society wedding in Sydney, to which end Lady Armstrong had gone in advance of her husband and daughter to arrange matters.

This fact it was, added to the double discovery that Thornborough was very hard hit, that had given Barton's face more than its usual seriousness on this sunny day in April.

It was the beginning of Australia's autumn, and the sun had begun to soften the intensity of its rays. It had been bearable—nay more, delightful—sitting on the quarter-deck that afternoon with Cherith Armstrong under the cool awning, but for the revelation that she had made to him.

Niels Barton could never understand why people confided in him as they did. It was deucedly awkward at times, he reflected, and this was one of them. Barton had never tried to borrow a little reflected glory from the Navy. He was quite proud enough of the service to which he belonged, in spite of the fact, so hard of realisation by a few restricted souls, that a man may be equally a man and a gentleman in the M.M.

As he had sat by the side of the fair, fragile little girl, whom he had found trying, or pretending to read, and listened to her little tale of woe, all the honour that was in him rose in revolt against a fate that seemed to be decreed.

He took the book from her listless hands, and had chosen one of Kipling's poems that he had taught her to understand and love. He had not read many lines before he found that to-day she was not listening; her blue eyes had a far away, misty look in them, and her delicately-veined hands locked and unlocked themselves nervously.

Presently she broke the spell of a silence that only the flutter of the leaves of the book had interrupted for some minutes.

"Mr. Barton, will you forgive me if I make a safety-valve of you? I must speak to someone, and I think you are the only one on board who would understand at all. I am going to confess.

"A fortnight ago I, Cherith Armstrong, was the girl you took me for—yes, don't contradict—I was, I know you did, and I deserve it; yet hear my defence. I was brought up to live for my own ends—my own amusement. I have made many conquests; so many that, when a year ago a new man out from England, came to Government House, my parents, who were getting tired of the responsibility, told me that he was the eligible *parti* whom I was to marry.

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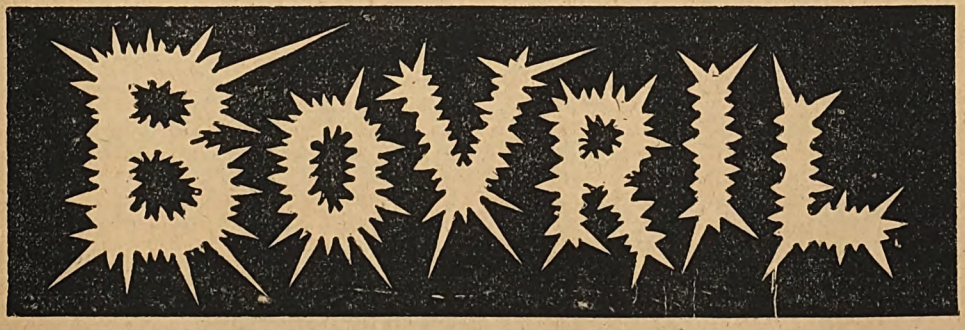

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"They had decided the question, and I acquiesed. I had no thought in the matter. You see, I had not been taught to think—only to amuse myself. I pinned my faith to the idea that so long as a girl had her fling it mattered little whom she married, so long as it was what the world called a good match, and I consented to be engaged.

"Only twice since have I seen the man I am to marry, and now I go to be his wife; but I swear to you solemnly that until I came on board the *Trebizond* I have never known what 'love' is."

She hesitated, flushing a deep crimson beneath her Leghorn hat with its masses of roses that matched the ribbons on her muslin dress. She was just a wee little bit of the daintiest Dresden china, Niels thought. It seemed sacrilege almost to touch her; and here, wonder of wonders, was the woman—the soul of the *woman* waking up, the gay butterfly whom he had decided had none. She went on with an effort:

"How could I help loving him? I know it's madness from any point of view but mine; but you—oh! you know him; he is your friend. Tell me, how could I help loving Hugh Thornburgh?"

Niels gripped the arm of her deck chair as in a vice.

"No," he said, "you couldn't help it. I grant you full absolution on that point."

"But you see," she went on, "how impossible it is. The mater is now in Sydney ordering my trousseau, and oh, think of me," she added pitifully, "at Warrimo—that's the pater's wedding gift to us, you know—seven miles from anywhere, with an husband who is M.I.C.E., an F.R.G.S., and—and other horrid things. At intervals there will come lectures on wifely obedience from the mater, and oh, you can take it from me, however often you may hear it quoted to the contrary, that there is no *happy* marriage possible in this world without love."

Niels Barton rose and ground his heel into the polished surface of the deck.

"Miss Armstrong, I thank you for your trust in me. I cannot help you in this, but if at any time I can, promise that you will let me know."

She gave it with a tremor in her voice, and he caught the words "I'll try—try and be worthy of his and of your good opinion" before she fluttered like a bird down the companion way and into her own room.

So Niels Barton concluded that he had grave reasons for his seriousness.

II.

And each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star,
Shall draw the thing as he sees it, for the God of things as they are.
L'Envoi (Kipling).

He had refilled his pipe, and renewed his pacing once more, when Thornburgh again appeared with a very different expression from the one he had worn an hour since.

"May I come in, Barton?"

"Why, of course you may! I'm on my second pipe already. Light up, if you've come for a yarn; there's an hour yet before I need dress for dinner. It's part of your luck to get out of that ordeal."

With that fineness of sympathy and tact generally supposed to be the attribute of the so-called gentler sex, but more often found in the sterner, Barton ignored his friend's white face and proceeded to search diligently for something he did not want in a drawer.

Thornburgh had deposited his well-set frame on the edge of Niel's bunk, and, as he finished speaking, he lifted his handsome face from his hands.

"Barton, old chap, that globe-trotting idiot, who hasn't succeeded in engrossing all Miss Armstrong's attention this voyage, has had the impudence to corner me in the reading room and inform me that it is my doing; and insulted me by saying it was not likely that Miss Armstrong would look at a beggar of an engineer with only his pay. As if any but a born idiot expected her to! I suppose one may be permitted to view the Promised Land, even though one may not be of the elect. I retorted that it was not likely she would look at a globe-trotting American, even accompanied by the almighty dollar, in any light but that of a curiosity, seeing she is going to Sydney to be married; but, perhaps, you don't keep the eighth commandment yourself, I added; I don't need any reminder, thanks; and with that I left him."

Barton smiled.

"He's in perfectly safe hands there, Thornburgh; but—but I'm afraid, old fellow, you're rather hard hit!"

"Pretty bad, Barton, thanks, but it's all in the day's work, you know. Of course, she doesn't suspect it. She'd never believe I'd the impudence to fall in love with her: and even if I were cad enough to let her know, why, what hope would there ever be of her ever caring for me? No, Barton, things are best as they are. She'll never know, and she may be happy if the man isn't a brute, which, please God, he isn't."

Niels gripped his hand. He was facing it so like a man that he would not make it worse for him by telling him what he knew. He would tell him after; perhaps she would leave some token for him to give him.

Twelve more restless hours for at least three on board the *Trebizond* and then she steamed slowly up past the creeks and inlets flanked by orange grooves and gum trees of the most beautiful harbour in the world. The sun shon out over its waste of waters, blue and still, in unconscious irony at least to those same three.

Thornburgh, who was on duty, kept religiously in the background. There was no good to be gained by a good-bye either for the Governor's daughter or for himself, so Barton was the last to see the "belle of the *Trebizond*."

He had been helping her to collect her music in the music room, and, as he rose with the heap in his arms, where she had placed it, to follow her, she turned and lifted her pitiful, fair, little face to his, and Niels Barton, with an impulse he could not resist, still less explain, turned and kissed her. She seemed to be asking to be comforted, and it was all he could do.

A week later a sorry little note arrived for him from the "Gresham." They were to be married from that hotel. It ran:

My Friend,

The only one who has told me the truth for the truth's sake—let me thank you for all your goodness to me. Remember your promise, and—forgive me. I am very weak, I know, but I am so lonely. I love Hugh Thornburgh more than life itself.

Have some pity for your poor little friend,

Cherith.

* * * * *

And did they run away these two lovers, as the up-to-date novelette would lead us to suppose? No; it was all very commonplace, and so like life, and we do not even know whether the unhappy couple lived unhappily ever after.

Edna S. Gamble.

(The Sequel will Appear Next Week.)

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YOU AND I.

Slum.—Berlin may be called a city without slums. There are districts in the north and east of the city where the poor live, but they are better housed than in most large cities; there are no alleys and courts, such as we know in London, for instance, and there is an absence of that misery and squalor that seems to chill us when we penetrate the poorer neighbourhoods here.

Court.—Sir H. Halford, M.D., was Court physician to four Sovereigns, namely, George III., George IV., William IV., and Queen Victoria. This is the only instance of the kind. He died in 1844.

M. E.—The natives of Easter Island, in the Pacific Ocean, had a curious custom, according to which their king was chosen. There was a legend to the effect that many years ago there was a good king, who used to collect the eggs of the seabirds. When he was old he did not die, but turned into a butterfly. The natives thought so much of him they could not decide which chief should succeed him. At last they determined that the one who collected the largest number of eggs within a certain time would be most like the old man, and from that time the appointment of king was decided in that way.

G. P.—No, the Danish flag, strictly speaking, is the oldest. It is a white cross on a red ground, and the adoption of this—the Danebrog—flag as the national standard of the Danish army dates from the victory won at Reval in 1219 by Valdemar II. It was at that time that the Northern Kingdom reached the highest point in its history. There is a traditional legend to the effect that the flag descended ready-made from Heaven in answer to Valdemar's prayer as he was leading his troops to battle.

F. A. G. asks: "Can a snake poison a snake?"——Reptiles are never affected by a bite from one of their own species; the common viper does not die from a bite from one of its own kind; the bite of the hooded snake, however, would probably be fatal to it.

H. B.—The best of the transparent soaps are made by dissolving ordinary soap in alcohol and then distilling it off again; otherwise they do not differ in constitution from the best primrose. English soaps are undoubtedly the best in the world. Continental soap is quite inferior, being less carefully made, and principally from oils instead of fats. It contains more soda and is irritating, although it makes up into more showy-looking toilet articles.

Q. W.—The first Quaker, and the founder of the sect in England, was George Fox, who flourished in the middle of the seventeenth century. There are, at least, two stories of the origin of the name "Quaker." One is that it was given to them because they made people tremble at the word of the Lord, and the other that they were so called owing to their gesticulation and shaking while preaching.

L. M. S. asks: "What is the idea in firing guns as a salute to any illustrious stranger visiting our shores?"——To show the visitor that he or she, as the case may be, is regarded as a friend, and that, therefore, it is unnecessary to keep the guns loaded as if an enemy were in the vicinity.

W. B.—Sovereigns were first issued in the reign of Henry VIII., and was so called because His Majesty in Royal robes was represented upon them.

J.—Railway travelling in Russia promises to become more agreeable than it has hitherto been. The companies have been smitten with a surprising desire for improvement; they are about to establish free libraries on the trains. If, during your stay in the country, you have to make a journey from Moscow to Sebastopol, you will be provided with literature—if you understand Russian.

R. H.—The largest statue ever made was the Colossus of Rhodes, the next largest being the statue of Bavaria, erected by Louis I., King of Bavaria.

D. R.—A tomb-dance is performed at St. Ives, Cornwall, by ten girls every fifth year. A Mr. Kaill, who died in 1811, left a sum of money to defray the expenses of ten girls of ten years of age who should dance for a quarter of an hour in the morning on a plot of land adjoining his mausoleum. They were to be dressed in white and have their hair elaborately curled and frizzed. A fiddler plays the music, and two elderly widows also receive a substantial gratuity for acting as witnesses.

G. M.—The Royal yachts are the property of the nation, not of the Queen personally.

W. H.—Windmills are in great request in European Russia, and there is money to be made by anyone who pushes on the trade of windmill machinery there. The country is flat and windy, and the people, backward as they are, seem to realise that the wind may be made to do something for the good of the community.

T.—I find that 1,000 tons of sugar are used every day in this United Kingdom in connection with tea drinking.

Mar.—You are quite right; in former times marriages were prohibited in this country during certain seasons. These were periods connected with religious festivals, as from "Advent Sunday to the octave of the Epiphany." In an almanack for 1678, the information is given that "marriage comes in on the 18th of January, and goes out on Septuagesima Sunday," and the like.

I. T.—In 1799, when the income-tax in its present form first came into operation, the rate was two shillings in the pound; it realised £6,000,000. Last year, with a rate one-third that amount, the tax brought rather more than £18,000,000. The tax was repealed. In 1842 it was re-imposed, and has stayed with us since without intermission. Not many persons will celebrate that centenary.

Monarch.—Of the seven Presidents of France (including the newly chosen one) who have been called to the head of affairs during the existence of the present French Republic, only one has been unanimously elected. That distinction was granted to M. Thiers, whose great services to his country was thus fittingly recognised.

X. I.—The greatest lady explorer of the present day is Miss Mary Kingsley, whose travels in West Africa astonished every well-seasoned male explorer about three years ago. The object of her journeyings was research into the social manners, folk-lore and customs of the natives; she visited some of the fiercest cannibal tribes of the interior, and collected many valuable objects, many of which are in the British Museum.

R. H.—Your friend is quite right. The word "Pup," properly speaking, should not refer to a little dog, but a little boy or girl. A little dog is so called because it is a pet.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 533. | FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 18TH, 1899. | [ONE PENNY.

PILLS NOT MADE IN GERMANY.

During the past few years "Made in Germany" has become all too familiar to Britishers. But though the Germans run us close in many a market, there is one department in wl ich they shiver on the brink and fear to launch away. We never see advertisements of "**Pills** made in Germany." Why? Because they lack the skill, genius, and brains to make a Pill that shall equal—say Page Woodcock's Wind Pills, the finest remedy in the world for the cure of Indigestion, Wind on the Stomach, Liver Complaints, Biliousness, Costiveness, Sick Headache, Palpitation of the Heart, &c.

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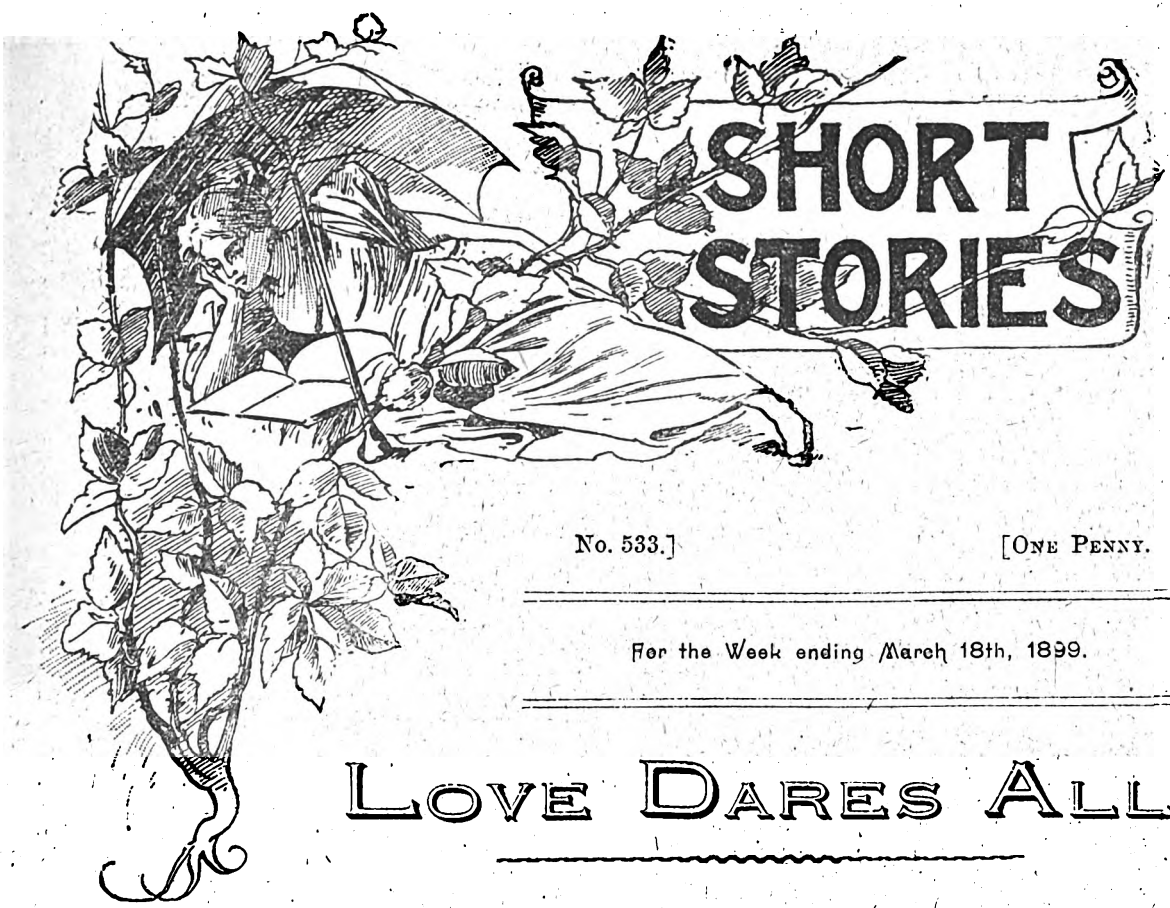

No. 533.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending March 18th, 1899.

Love Dares All.

Tat-tat-tat sounded in a dreary monotone from the drums, and slowly, in single file, the miserable prisoners came into view. Ragged, dirty, unkempt, footsore, panting from the blazing August sky, they were truly a pitiable sight. Yet they held up their heads defiantly, and smiled derisively at the insulting epithets and grimaces which the lower classes heaped upon them, especially in the vicinity of any officer's residence. The better classes of the Havanese showed their sympathy in striking contrast to the jeers and jibes of the baser sort.

The year was 1851, directly after the capture of Crittenden, Lopez's brave lieutenant, in his ill-starred expedition to Cuba. He and his Spartan remnant were these forlorn prisoners.

When they reached the Calle de la Lamparilla, one of the narrow streets of the city, the guards suddenly halted the column and reverently bared their heads. A funeral procession was approaching from the opposite direction, and the line was pushed close towards the houses jutting on the narrow footway, scarcely worthy the name of pavement.

A youth among the foremost prisoners, who, evidently, had not the fortitude of his elder companions, judged by his bowed head and deep dejection, now looked up with a wan smile of recognition as a pair of dark eyes brimming with tears gazed through a latticed window at the pitiful sight.

"Amalia!" he whispered.

"Robercito! Is it indeed you? Oh, how terrible! I did not dream you were with them."

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"Dearest cousin, save me!" he replied, in Spanish as fluent as her own. "We are all condemned to be shot in two days, perhaps sooner. I am too young to die."

"Would that I could, but, alas! I am powerless as a lamb among wolves!"

"Amalia, don't say that! You have friends among the Spaniards. For the love of my mother——"

"Forward, march!" rang on the air, and the weary column passed on to the dungeons of Morro Castle.

That night the Señorita Amalia de Valdez was a dream of loveliness as she reclined listlessly among the cushions on a lounge in her handsome salon. She was considered to be the beauty of beauties in the capital famed for the grace and loveliness of its women.

Young Captain Antonio de Ramon, who presently entered, was so enraptured with her appearance that only the presence of the inevitable duenna restrained him from throwing himself at her feet in reality, as well as in the formal salutation with which Spanish gentlemen greet all ladies.

But she looked pre-occupied, sad, despondent, and replied absently to his greeting. He seated himself near her, while the duenna, her gentle aunt Maria, retired to a distant corner.

"Tell me, my soul," said he, "why are you so melancholy?"

A sigh was the only answer.

"Ah, yes! I know your tender heart aches for the poor prisoners you have seen to-day. Poor fellows! Theirs is a terrible fate. But tell me, what is it you wished to ask me? Can there be a wish of yours I

would not gratify at the risk of my life, if need be? I have your precious note safe here," and he pointed to his heart. "You have but to command and I will obey."

"Aunt *mia*," said Amalia, turning to her aunt, "I have mislaid my pearl bracelet upstairs. Will you kindly look for it?"

The duenna vanished as if she had expected the request. Amalia turned to him at once and said:

"You have often sworn that you love me to distraction; is it not so, Antonito?"

What happiness it was for him to hear from her lips the diminutive "ito" added to his name, which, in itself, is a caress in words.

"My life, with all my heart and soul," he exclaimed. But she drew back.

"No, I give myself only to him who proves his love."

"What can I do for you, beloved? Dispose of me as you will for life."

"It is life I ask. Sit here, beside me, dearest, and I will tell you."

She then related the scene of the morning, the discovery that Roberto, who had passed the previous winter in Havana with his family, was now among the prisoners.

"He is the son of my favourite aunt—so young, barely sixteen. He came here to perfect himself in Spanish, and I inspired him with my own enthusiasm for the Cuban cause. He has returned, alas! to die, unless you will save him for my sake. Should he perish, I can never know another happy moment."

Antonio grew pale as he listened.

"Amalia, you cannot break my heart thus. Ask me anything else."

"Antonito *ma!* I love you," she sobbed. "For you I would give up home, relatives, country, for this one favour. Save that poor child, and I swear to become your wife in another month. You have said that if I would marry you, you would resign your hateful commission in the army and seek a home in Mexico. I will follow you there and to the end of the earth."

"You have won," he said after a pause. "For you I will dare anything. They are to be shot the day after to-morrow. I have but a short time, and now must leave you, dearest. If I fail, you will forgive me, will you not? or I will not survive my disgrace."

* * * * *

Roberto lay on a pallet beside two comrades, who, in the midst of their own misery, tried to cheer and fortify the boy, exhorting him to meet manfully a doom which they felt was even more terrible for him than for them.

He had been one of the most enthusiastic volunteers: had fought well, but now the near prospect of death seemed to make a coward of him.

A soldier entered the cell at this moment, and roughly bade him rise and follow to the captain's room. Roberto rose tremblingly.

"Courage, my boy," said a middle-aged man, "perhaps it is good news for you. If not, beware lest he wring from you a word about Lopez's plans."

"Never fear," he replied, making an effort to control his agitation. "I hate to die"—here he gulped down a sob—"this way, but I'll not be a traitor."

The guard interrupted further speech by pushing him into the corridor with his musket.

"Here is the prisoner, captain."

"Very well, you may retire, sergeant."

Antonio locked the door after him, and in a low tone briefly related to Roberto the plan he had formulated for the latter's escape.

"Each prisoner will receive three shots. By dint of extensive bribery, and the co-operation of a surgeon, a secret friend of the Cuban cause, I have arranged that three blank cartridges shall be fired at you. You must be careful to simulate death as much as possible until the word 'Amalia' is whispered in your ear. Then you may breathe freely and open your eyes, for you will be temporarily safe.

"Further details will then have been arranged and will be communicated to you. The least indiscretion on your part, the least bungling on that of those I have employed, though only two are in the secret, will ruin me as well as seal your fate."

Roberto thanked him fervently, and promised him implicit obedience.

"You must not return to your comrades."

"Poor fellows!" muttered Roberto.

"The light of hope is shining in your eyes, and might betray us. Look as downcast as when you entered, if possible. Come in, sergeant," he said, and, as he entered the door, added, "conduct this prisoner to a solitary cell. He must have no communication with the other filibusters."

They passed out, and Antonio, groaning deeply, murmured:

"Oh, my love, what a sacrifice!"

* * * * *

The courtyard of the castle was thronged with soldiers as the unfortunate band were marched to their death-place just as day was breaking over the beautiful bay. Surrounded by hostile soldiers they still maintained a defiant air, even when the glittering line of bayonets faced them, and they knew all hope was over.

"Kneel, filibusters!"

The command was not obeyed; the men proudly refused.

A struggle ensued, in which some were forced to their knees; perhaps all might have been, had not the officer in charge, with a touch of humanity, begun giving the orders.

At the word "Fire!" so deadly was the volley that few survived it, and they but a few moments. Roberto, happily, had no need to simulate death. The shock and strain of the suspense had caused him to faint, and the surgeon, who hastened to his side, gave a deep sigh of relief as he perceived Roberto's rigid unconsciousness

"Carry this body, and this, and this,"—pointing to several—"to the hospital."

"If they are not dead now, they will soon be under his knife," laughed one of his assistants.

When Roberto revived, he found himself in a carefully darkened room. With joy he heard the word "Amalia" in a friendly voice. In a day or two, according to Antonio's previously concerted arrangements, he was smuggled, in the disguise of a waterman, to an English ship in the harbour and concealed in the hold all night.

The next day he thanked his devoted cousin as he inhaled with a glad sense of freedom, the fresh breeze of the sea. He never returned to Cuba.

The gay capital of Cuba was quite electrified a month later to learn of the resignation from the Army of Captain Antonio, and his marriage immediately after, in spite of opposition on the part of her family to the beautiful Señorita Amalia de Valdez.

Winnifrede Wilberforce.

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"The Belle of the Trebizond" appeared last week.

A FAIR, fragile, small-featured, little woman, neatly dressed in black, and wearing the tokens of her widowhood, knelt by the side of a huge dress basket into which she was tumbling, pell mell, sundry articles of clothing.

"Is 'oo doin' way, muvver, 'oo take Nigel?" said a baby voice at her elbow. She looked down to meet the gaze of a pair of wistful blue eyes turned on her questioningly.

"Why, of course, Sonny. Oh, don't look at me with those eyes, child. You seem to reproach me. You look at your mother as if she were about to commit some awful crime. Will the child never smile, I wonder?"

But the baby eyes were all misty, and in an instant she caught him in her arms passionately.

"Your mother is a brute, Sonny, and you—you are an angel, only I wish you were a *little* more human. Now, if only you'd howl as most babies I have seen do, instead of looking hurt; but you can't help it, I suppose, it's your poor dear father's heritage passed on—Sonny," she said, releasing him, "go and tell Oko Yama mother will have tea on the veranda."

The little feet trotted off willingly. Nigel Croft was the essence of implicit obedience although but two and a half years old. Cherith Croft threw herself into a low deck chair.

"Oh, life, how strange you are," she said. "Here am I, a widow of but two months, now on my way back—back on the old, old trail, the trail that in my thoughts is always new; back to Wellington, and—and, of course, I'm very wicked, but all the time I'm wondering why Mr. Barton hasn't written, and if he and Hugh are still on the *Trebizond*. I don't think I could trust myself to cross again with him; but he may be married, or—or dead." She shuddered at this last thought. "What nonsense to think of him at all."

Pattering feet were heard returning on the veranda.

"Ah, Sonny—what, a letter for mother? Oh, Nigel, from Mr. Barton, too."

His mother had got into the habit of talking to the child of all that was in her heart, and she never knew how much he understood. The long, long months that she had been left by her husband, with only Jap servants and her one English maid (whom she had now sent into Sydney in advance to arrange for their removal from "Warrimoo") had thrown her and the child very much together, more than perhaps was good for him.

"Muvver," he interrupted, "is Mr. Barton muvver's fwend on the big ship. Sall Nigel love him?"

"Yes, sonny, you must love him right up to the skies. He's mother's only friend; and now I'm going to read his letter," she added.

And she did aloud. She had forgotten she had told the babe to listen, and he sat at her feet, his blue eyes full of wonder and a pucker in his little bronzed forehead.

"DEAR MRS. CROFT,

"I was indeed glad to have your letter, though sorry at the news it contained of your trouble. You know already that you have my sympathy, do you not? And I am sure I can say truly that of one other. Need I mention his name? You ask three questions concerning him; let me answer them. He is not on the *Trebizond*, having removed the voyage after you were with us to a newer ship of the line. There he has been promoted to first engineer, and still writes me. He is still unmarried. As answer to your third question, I am going to say what, but for your husband's accident and death, would never have been said, and that is that Hugh Thornburgh loved you on the *Trebizond*, kept out of your way the day you left, because he could not trust himself to see you, and left the ship because he could not bear it after. We shall be leaving again next week—the *Black Watch* the week after. Need I say I can guarantee you the greatest attention on either.

"Yours always to command,

"NIELS BARTON."

Cherith Croft was alone. She had sent Sonny out at the mention of his father to tell Oko Yama to pull the chairs out of the sun, and be quick.

She looked lovingly again at the words in the latter half of the letter, then buried her face, blushing as that of a girl of nineteen at her first love-letter, in the soft cushions of her chair. "And to think that I'm reading it in the very same chair that I sat in when I told Niels. Oh, Sonny, Sonny, your little mother's very wicked, but so very happy, dear," she said, hugging him to her as he returned to say tea was waiting.

"*My* little muvver's very good," said Sonny reproachfully, as though she were slurring him, slipping his wee hand into hers and toddling off.

Ere he had drained every drop of his lime juice and set down his silver mug with an air of satisfaction, his little mother had decided that she could not catch the *Trebizond*, and that the time of starting of the *Black Watch* would suit her admirably.

Three days later, with her boy and her retinue of faithful Jap servants, the wife of the late Commissioner of Lands and Mines left "Warrimoo" behind her for ever. She called it her life school; there she had learnt the value of obedience without question, of duty minus love.

Content had come into her life and left its traces on her face, which motherhood had softened wondrously; but never had she known the happiness that now filled her heart as they steamed up the coast by the Government yacht to Sydney.

* * * * *

"Louise, are you sure it was only 650 lbs. baggage the agent said? Then I must leave Sonny's portable kitchen behind."

Scarcely had Cherith Croft given vent to this most prosaic reflection, when she felt the gaze of two dark brown eyes riveted on her, and she looked up to see a handsome, boyish figure, half hesitating before her, his hand to his cap.

"Ah, Mrs. Croft, I thought I could not be wrong," as she smiled, "but this," touching her arm lightly, "makes a difference. I did not know," he added, rather confusedly.

"Of course not—how should you? Why, you've only arrived to-day, haven't you? We are waiting to cross by the *Black Watch*, and I was discussing the baggage with Louise. Louise, you may return to the hotel with baby—and, Louise, order tea for two. You will come, will you not?"

Hugh Thornburgh smilingly bowed his delight at the prospect.

"We were on our way to the office," she went on.

"So I supposed when I met you in Bridge Street," he put in.

How handsome he looked, thought Cherith as she glanced up at him from the side of her little widow's bonnet; but the light on the brass buttons of his new uniform was dull to the light that shone in Hugh Thornburgh's dark eyes as he said:

"Can the baggage wait now. I have something to tell you—a bit of good luck that has fallen to my share. Can I count on your congratulations, I wonder?"

What could it be? she wondered. Was it possible he was going to tell her that he was engaged? Did that account for his bright face? She caught her breath sharply, and forced a little smile as she answered:

"That will depend on whether you think you deserve them."

"Well, my old granddad—did you know he was Sir Jasper Thornburgh, of the Windermere family?—has thought fit to depart this life and to leave his favourite grandson, whom I have been informed by his lawyers was me, the great bulk of his fortune. The estate goes to my eldest brother, my father being dead, and the neat little sum of £20,000 to yours truly."

A glad new light broke on her face.

"Oh! I am so glad—so glad for your sake," she said.

And as they walked up the steps of the hotel, which looked out on to the harbour, and he made her feel so happy and at ease with a new air of protection that sat so well on him, visions of Government appointments that her father might find to suit the heir of Sir Jasper Thornburgh—who was, of course, quite another person from the second engineer of the *Trebizond*—flashed through her mind.

"I suppose you will leave the *Black Watch* now," she said, as he brought her her tea, "and," falteringly, "go to England."

She looked up with a brave attempt at a smile.

"Well, I suppose I must, as I scarcely want the berth now, and there are others wanting it badly. You see, I only knew an hour since, when I got my letters."

An awkward pause was filled in by Sonny, who appeared, robed by Louise in his best bib and tucker in honour of mother's visitor.

"Muvver," he inquired, his blue eyes dwelling with a look of curiosity on Hugh's bright buttons, "is zis muvver's only fwend, Mr. Barton, off the big ship?"

"No, dearest, this is Mr. Barton's friend. Mr. Thornburgh, this is my little son. Come and say how do you do, Sonny. Nigel is an angel, but the child never smiles," she added *sotto voce*. "Do you think anything would make him?"

"I think I could do it if only you would let me try," he said; then added softly, "It will be partly conditional, I presume, being the angel that he is that Nigel copies his mother in everything. Now, if his mother were happy she would smile; so you see the cure must begin with mother. Isn't that so, Nigel?"

The boy nodded his golden head that Hugh was stroking with that bronzed hand of his that could be as gentle in its touch as any woman's.

"Iss, but muvver won't have 'oo for a fwend like Mr. Barton, else I fink 'oo could, 'cos muvver loves him and says he made her happy. Will 'oo have him for a fwend, muvver," he added, dragging Hugh towards his mother's chair, his blue eyes full of the solemn earnestness of the question in his childish mind that he only half understood.

His mother looked up, and Hugh caught a flash of the old Cherith he had known on the *Trebizond*.

"I didn't think he'd be satisfied with that title, Sonny," she said shyly, blushing a rosy red.

Hugh had been dragged to her feet by Sonny to await the verdict, and when he saw her blushing face and the downcast eyes he caught her two little white hands between his own brown palms, rapturously covering them with kisses.

Sonny smiled his approval—the cure had begun already—and sat down to the discussion of some cakes he had found.

"Is it possible, my queen, my sweet little Cherith, that you have another title to give me?" went on Hugh. "I have so long been the poor man content with the crumbs from the rich man's table that I cannot take in all this happiness at once, and—and I was afraid of this," touching her sleeve lightly. "I did not know how long since it was."

"A little more than two months," she said; "but oh, Hugh, though I tried so hard to be good, I was never happy, never as happy as I am now, dear. He was good, oh, so good, and I respected him, but I did not love him, Hugh. Is it very wicked to be so happy now. I was true to him, aye, even in thought till his death, for I promised Mr. Barton I would live to be worthy of his and your good opinions, and I think I made him a good wife," she added pleadingly.

"Sonny, it is time for bed, dear. Go to Louise." And the little one trotted off obediently.

Then Hugh took her in his arms, and kissed away the unshed tears that were trembling in the blue eyes; and when he left her later, to get off a letter to his lawyers, it was with a bright, glad face and a gay laugh that she said "And you'll see to the baggage, Hugh?"

"Aye," he answered, "and the sauciest bit of it, too, for I guess she will give me most trouble, eh?"

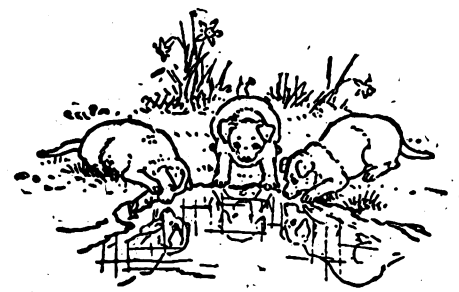
As Hugh had surmised, there were many ready to take his place, and since he found he could draw on his granddad's legacy from the Sydney branch of his bank, he sped up to the Metropole early next morning, his project fresh in his mind.

"Don't you think, little one, that I could take you home and ask for the paternal blessing—not that it's a necessity—at the same time? We can wait for the *Trebizond's* return. Will a month's courtship satisfy you, dear? and that will appease society, too. Then Barton can be best man, and we can be married in Wellington. You'll like that better than Sydney, eh, dear?"

"Yes," she answered, nestling into his strong arms. And so it happened that two months after a quiet wedding took place from Government House.

* * * * *

A year later they were sitting on the veranda at "Coogee." Sir Philip had given them his little country



bungalow on the outskirts of Wellington as his wedding gift.

A tiny morsel of humanity, with twinkling black eyes, and draped in gauze and costly laces—for it was the New Zealand summer, and the thermometer registered sixty in the shade—lay on its mother's lap. Its father was engaged in puffing volumes of smoke into its face "just to see if it could sneeze."

Nigel stood over him as protector, and, when too exasperated, made a lunge at his father. He had approved of his new father when he found that he could draw plans and pictures; but, although Hugh succeeded in making him smile, he had never got him to romp.

"Hugh, don't tease him any more," said his wife as severely as she could, "or I shall order you to carry baby in."

This threat always had the desired effect—he was afraid the thing would fall in pieces, he said—and he desisted from experimenting on the face of Hugh Barton Thornburgh.

"What a contrast the two boys will be, Hugh. Nigel loves little Hugh very much, but he'll keep him in order when he grows up; and he'll need it, too. Just look at the rascal now, laughing at six weeks old."

"What do you expect when he has a mother who, for all her dignity now, was once the Belle of the *Trebizond*. And Cherie," he added seriously, "you'll keep that roguishness always, won't you, for I learnt to love you then."

And, for all we ever heard to the contrary, this couple lived happily ever after.

Edna S. Gamble.

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IN A PALE PINK GOWN.

THE scene — Waterloo; the hour — mid-day. A throng of eager men pressing towards the barrier that keeps them back until the train for Kempton Park is ready. The event coming off that afternoon is an important one. The Heir-Apparent has announced an intention of being present. The ever gracious Princess proposes accompanying His Highness, and a gentleman who passes the busy, gossiping groups on his way to another platform, sends a wistful look towards them.

He is recognised and seized by a couple of acquaintances.

"Hi, Cheltnam; Hallo, Rollo; Whither bound, my boy? Aren't you going with us?"

"I wish I were. I should dearly like to see that race run."

"Not too late," interposed one of his friends. "Get your ticket, and come along."

Rollo Cheltnam shook his head, and declared it to be impossible.

"I did not know that word was in your dictionary," laughed the other. "But you're made up for travelling—dust-coat and valise. Whither goest thou? Running away from your creditors, or off for your honeymoon? Married your landlady's or your laundress' daughter on the sly, eh?"

It was Rollo's turn to laugh now, which he did rather ruefully.

"I don't know if I should be much worse off if I had committed the sin of matrimony, providing the maiden was fair to see. But if I haven't, my brother Tom has, and I'm suffering for it."

"But that's ten years ago," he was reminded. "Didn't Tom marry the prettiest of Mayor Ernest's daughters just before he went to India to take up that appointment?"

"Yes," said Tom Cheltnam's brother; "and he is now the happy parent of six or seven, I forget which, and had made arrangements for a two years' leave, that he might bring his wife over to recruit her health, and find schools for the elder boys. But unluckily, there has been a revolt of some of the hill tribes, and Tom must stay to help quell it, so he has sent Mrs. Tom and the olive branches by the *Enterpe* and will follow as soon as he can."

"In the meantime, on you devolves the delightful task of meeting the lady when she lands."

"She has landed. Owing to that gale, the *Enterpe* arrived before the mail that brought Tom's letter. My sister-in-law is already housed at Borton Court, a pretty little place, half farm, half country-house, near Hythe, secured for her by one of her sisters, whose husband is in the Artillery, and quartered at Dover."

"And you?"

Rollo shrugged his shoulders.

"I am the happy individual who, being popularly supposed to have nothing to do because I am a journalist, am expected to go to Mrs. Cheltnam's and execute all her commissions. I have a cart-load of them in the guard's van, besides the high chairs, perambulators, and bath-tubs that are to follow by goods train. Tom will depend on me—so he writes—to keep up her spirits till he can join her; and I am to take care that no one imposes on her. Cissie herself telegraphs that she cannot stay in that lonely place unless I am there to keep guard over the safety of her darling ones. She evidently anticipates their being gurgled one by one, and will expect me to do sentry—go in her nursery, armed with a revolver and a Malay creese."

"I don't envy you, old fellow," said one of the young men.

"But you'll think of me tenderly, won't you? and, by Jove, that's my train over yonder. Here's my new address; send me a fuller, truer report of the day's doings than I shall glean from the newspapers. Adieu!"

Rollo Cheltnam's sister-in-law was waiting for him at Hythe Station in a pony-chaise, so small that it was difficult to find room for his valise, even though the boy groom was left to follow with the sundries in a cart.

"It is hard on your long legs, my poor Rollo," said Mrs. Cheltnam, a still pretty, though faded blonde, "but these are such up-and-down roads, and my wrists are so weak, that I thought it prudent to hire the lightest vehicle I could get. If I am to be upset, I don't want to be buried under a ton weight of iron and clumsy wood-work."

"Shall I relieve you of the responsibility of driving?" she was asked.

"Well—no, thanks; I think not," said Mrs. Cheltnam. "You see, if we do have a spill, I shall

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not be half so angry with myself, as I should be with you, if the fault were yours."

"You are as frank as ever," her brother-in-law told her. "As frank as when you objected to my acting as best man to my brother, because I was so ugly and awkard."

"Ah, that was when you were but a lad. I shouldn't say so now. You really have improved so much, so very much that—I have two marriageble sisters; I think I shall ask them to come to Borton Court while you are with me."

"Better not," was the laughing response. "I cannot wed both, and it might cause dissension in the family. Besides I am not a marrying man. With so many nephews and nieces, it is my bounden duty to live and die a bachelor after amassing a fortune for them."

To which speech Mrs. Cheltnam irreverently answered:

"Bah! I suppose the truth is, you are already engaged."

"No, on my honour; the bright, particular star I am to worship, has not yet dawned on the horizon."

"Then you must be dreadfully hard to please, sir!" This was said with much severity.

"There's lots of good, pretty girls to be had, now aren't there?"

"Ask Tom. He'll tell you he never knew but one, and as he snapped her up, there is nought left for me."

"If you are going to talk such utter nonsense, Rollo!" and the lady frowned, and menaced him with the whip, "why, we shall quarrel."

"To avert which sad catastrophe shall we agree to banish the subject on which we have differed? I promising to do my *devoirs*, as your trusty knight, and you binding yourself not to put any snares in the way of my unwary footsteps."

"Snares, indeed! I'm not so sure that either Pet or Popsy would consent to accept a newspaper-man," cried Cissie, tossing her head.

"And so you'll not expose me to the mortification of a rejection. Bless, thee, sweet sister mine! Is there either of your babies to whom I could be godfather, in token of my gratitude?"

"You'll have to be very fond of them all, or I shall be dreadfully hurt. Tom is such an adoring parent. Oh, Rollo, I feel lost without him; no one to appeal to in any difficulty, no one to rely upon!"

"Rely upon it, we shall be over that bank if you do not wipe the tears out of your eyes. Did you have a pleasant voyage?"

"Pleasant, with six children, an incompetent ayah, and an English maid who fibbed shamefully. She wanted to get home to her soldier-husband, so protested, by everything sacred, that she was never ill at sea, and yet lay in her berth three parts of the time, and I—yes, I—had to crawl out of mine to wait on her. Don't I look a perfect wreck? But, of course, I must after what I went through."

"Do you like your house?" queried Rollo, desirous of introducing a new subject.

"I have scarcely looked at it. There must be stronger bolts and locks put on the doors, or how shall I be able to sleep? and outside shades to the windows, for the glare hurts my eyes; and some soft felt laid down in the passages; for the clatter of the children's feet distracts my poor head. And there must be double doors to the nurseries, and bars to the windows—what would Tom say to me if I let one of his darlings fall out?—and a railing round a nasty little fish-pond there is in the orchard; and the drawing-room paper is odious. It must be taken down before I can sit there, or receive visitors. But, of course, dear Rollo, you'll see to all these things for me, and don't forget some donkeys for the little ones. I told them they should have some when Uncle Rollo came."

"With I myself as the leader? My prominent thought just at this moment is what are you going to give me for dinner. I suppose you have engaged a cook?"

"Oh, yes, and kitchenmaid, besides a couple of housemaids. I don't know whether the latter will prove satisfactory. My cousin Marian, who met me when I landed, pressed me so strongly to take a couple of girls, sisters, from her industrial school, that I had to say yes. They seem active and willing, but so stupid, so vacant that, after trying for half an hour this morning to make one of them understand what I meant by a *portiere*, I gave it up in despair. I really cannot be worried. I don't want Tom to find me haggard and ill."

"Is the cook as stolid? If so—alas! and woe is me—what shall we have to eat?"

"Oh, she sent up a lovely curry last night, so there's hopes of her. I went downstairs to interview her this morning, but my first glance at her frightened me away. She is one of the ugliest, boniest women I ever beheld! As tall as a grenadier, with a voice like a bassoon, and eyes—protruding eyes—so fierce that I shiver when I think of them. I shall never venture into her domain again—never! The remembrance of her hideousness will give me bad dreams."

"Which her excellent cooking will chase away. There's consolation in that thought, isn't there? Now tell me something about my unknown nephews and nieces."

But though Rollo Cheltnam testified the correct amount of interest in his young relatives, he was not sorry to hear on his arrival at Borton Court that they were just going to tea, and then to bed, and the interview must be deferred till the morrow.

Mrs. Cheltnam had not lauded too extravagantly the abilities of her ugly *cuisiniere*. The dinner was not only cooked well, but served prettily, flowers decorating the dishes and the table with a tastefulness of which the stolid maids who waited were evidently incapable.

"She will be a treasure if she keeps out of sight," her mistress declared; "but I must either shut my eyes when I give my orders, or send written ones. Dear me!" and Mrs. Cheltnam leaned back in her chair to survey herself in a mirror, "what an affliction it must be to be plain!"

Anxiety on the score of her complexion sent the lady to her room at an early hour, Rollo sitting up till midnight to write letters.

He had just completed his task when, in tying a string round some papers he wanted to have posted, he contrived to dig a pen-knife into the fleshy part of his thumb, and, to his vexation, it bled so much that he was obliged to make his way to the kitchen, there to bathe the wound, and try to find someone to bind it up.

But the servants appeared to have followed the example of their mistress, and retired early, for not a sound could he hear as he pushed open the double doors leading to the offices. However, a bright little fire still glowed in the stove; a lamp was burning on a small table by the hearth; and he saw, as he softly advanced, that a young girl was seated in an arm-chair beside the table, an open note-book and pencil on her knees, and in her hand a volume, in which she was so absorbed that she did not detect his footsteps.

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Her dress was an ordinary print, her cap and apron of coarse muslin, but the gown of palest pink fitted her splendid figure *à merveille*, and her apron was as coquettish and becoming as the little French cap tied in a bewitching bow and ends under the coronet of her dark hair.

She sprang up as soon as she became aware of Rollo's presence. Her colour deepened, and she bit her lip in manifest embarrassment, but still hers was not the awkward confusion of an uneducated girl. She bowed politely in acknowledgment of his apology, offered her help as soon as she learned what had brought him there, fetched sponges and warm water, and tore up her handkerchief—a cambric one—to form a bandage for the wounded thumb.

He thanked her warmly for her assistance, saying, with a smile:

"I shall have to recant one of my heresies. I thought that between fifteen and fifty your sex were wont to greet the sight of blood with a swoon or hysterics."

"Not now that so many of us gain presence of mind and experience by joining the ambulance classes," she answered quietly.

"Have you won your medal yet?" he asked. "If not, and a testimonial from your latest patient will be of any service, I shall be most happy."

She smiled a smile so arch, so merry, that it quite changed the pensive character of her regular features; then gathered up her towels, etc., and carried them away, leaving Rollo peeping between the pages of the volume she had let fall.

It was Schiller, and in the original.

A highly educated woman apparently; but who could she be? The governess to Cissie Cheltnam's little girls? Her attire seemed to contradict that suggestion; her demeanour, her refined voice and cultured speech rendered it equally doubtful whether she could be the nurse of whom Mrs. Cheltnam had spoken slightingly, as picked up at Madras just for the voyage, and proving more plague than profit.

Rollo stood with the book in his hand, waiting to restore it to its owner, till the silence that reigned around awakened him to the truth. She had gone away with no intention of returning; and, laughing at himself for not guessing that sooner, he too, went to bed.

Cissie condoled with him at breakfast when she saw his tied-up thumb; but when he mentioned how skilfully her lady help, or children's governess, had played the doctress, she opened her blue eyes wonderingly.

"I have no lady help! Higgins is my maid, Rollo, and I have not felt up to the exertion of engaging a governess yet. I suppose I must advertise. Couldn't you interview the candidates? It is such a hateful task. I shall be harassed into my grave before I've seen half of them."

"Let Higgins—faugh, what a name!"—this *sotto voce*. "Let Higgins select from them. She looks capable enough."

"Ah! yes, she's a good soul," replied Cissie. "Rather obstinate and provoking. I'm afraid it's a mistake keeping servants with one so long. They get exaggerated ideas of their own value. She was with mamma thirteen years, and now ten with me."

Then it could not have been his sister-in-law's attendant Rollo had seen.

"It must have been your nurse who ministered to me so tenderly," he said.

"Which of them? But you must be making game of me, for you could not mistake Maimee for an English upper-servant, and I got rid of the other as soon as we landed."

Rollo forced a laugh.

"How very ridiculous I am, and how good-natured of you to bear with my nonsense so calmly!"

And then he edged away to avoid being tormented with further questioning. But all the while he talked and laughed, played with the children, and made himself useful to their indolent, exacting mother, he was carefully noting her every word and look.

Someone was mystifying him. Could it be she? Had she been in sober earnest when she spoke of her sisters, and was the lady of the pale pink gown one of these damsels already introduced into the house with designs upon his heart and hand?

* * * * *

A few days spent at Bolton Court brought Rollo Cheltnam to the conviction that Cissie's intellect was not equal to the strain of carrying out a deliberate scheme. Besides, the dangerous damsels, her unwedded sisters, had written to postpone their coming. "Dear Cis must excuse them till after their return from Weymouth, where they had been due these three weeks, and were entered to play in a grand tennis match against the officers of the regiment stationed at Portland."

Still, as he often told himself, it was queer, exceedingly queer, that so charming a person should be a member of his sister-in-law's household, and yet hold no definite position in it. She was neither nurse nor governess, maid nor help; never appearing in the drawing-room nor the nursery, where Uncle Rollo soon proved a welcome visitor.

Mrs. Cheltnam was her own housekeeper, and she had not engaged a needlewoman or sewing maid, and by no amount of indirect questioning could Rollo elicit a spark of information respecting the unknown. She was in the house, for he had seen and spoken with her, but who and what was she, and where?

Baffled at all other points, he made an excuse for revisiting the kitchen. It was that he had first beheld her, and there that his curiosity might be satisfied. In these days of progress and Board-schools, was it not possible for the student of Schiller to be neither more nor less than the daughter of the highly-respectable matron whose culinary achievements proved her to be a genius of no mean order?

But when Rollo walked into her domain, on pretence of wanting a luncheon basket packed, his first glance at Mrs. Cheltnam's Sarah, convinced him that there could be no such tie between her and the maiden of the pale pink gown. Cook was a clumsy, commonplace woman of thirty, with the limbs of a grenadier and a face that was only redeemed from positive ugliness by its air of honesty and good humour.

She was civil and obliging, but in such a monosyllabic fashion that he came away no wiser that he went. Once he fancied he caught a glimpse of flowing draperies through a half open door, and made an excuse for approaching it; but when he peeped in, nothing was to be seen but the table at which cook herself appeared to have been making pastry when he disturbed her.

He was strongly tempted to put the question outright. Where is the young lady to whom I was indebted the other night? But in spite of her civility, cook eyed him with distrust, as if suspecting some ulterior object for his presence, and to lead up to the subject with a woman who rarely answered his remarks with more than a nod or shake of the head was impossible.

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To his surprise, she abruptly addressed him as he was walking away discomfited.

"You're a lawyer, ain't you, sir?"

"A barrister—yes; but I do not practise much. Why did you ask?"

But she only dropped a curtesy, said "Thankye, sir," and dived into the scullery, where he could not very well follow.

Rollo was musing over the oddity of the circumstance that evening, as he smoked a cigar, while pacing a path at the end of the grounds, to which he frequently retreated, partly because Mrs. Cheltnam disliked it as gloomy, and forbade it to her children as damp.

The night was cloudy, darkness almost intense wherever the lime trees met overhead, and it would have startled the bravest, when a tall, gaunt figure noiselessly stalked from behind a mass of rhododendrons, and suddenly stood before him.

"It's only me, sir; Sarah Colby, sir; Mrs. Cheltnam's cook," he was told. "You gives legal advice to them as wants it, don't yer, sir?" Here a broad palm was thrust before his eyes, with a gold coin lying on it; "You'll be pleased to give me as far as it'll go, for the 'mount of that sovereign."

Rollo smiled as he replied that he dare say he could give her the information she stood in need, without putting her to any expense at all.

But he was heard with a dissenting shake.

"Thankye, sir, but it must be pay as we goes, or she won't like it; nor it wouldn't be fair neither to take up your time for nothing, seeing it's no trifling matter in which we want you to 'vise us."

We; then she was acting for another more than herself. Was it his fancy that he could hear a slight movement behind the shrubs? And was it the mysterious maiden who stood there awaiting the result of this dialogue?

"Tell me, then, plainly and frankly, what induced you to come to me. If I cannot give you the advice you lack, I can at least direct you to a gentleman who will."

Sarah was grateful, and said so in her slow, lumbering style.

"Thankye, sir. You see, it's not for me so much as the young lady as came to the hotel at Dover, where I was kitchen maid. In great trouble she was; father dead, and relations that had fetched her from convent school wanted to marry her right off there and then, to one of 'em as she couldn't abide. And when she objected, told her that her pa had left his dying orders upon her, as she was to, and must; or give up the whole of her fortune, and be a beggar."

There was quite a romance in this brief and awkwardly told story. Perhaps it might not have awakened such vivid interest if Rollo Cheltnam had not seen the person of whom it was related.

"No one in England can be compelled to marry against her will," he said. "If the relatives of this young lady were persecuting her, she should have sought other protection."

"That's just what she did, sir, catching hold o' me when I was sent to take her some tea. 'I'm ill,' says she, sobbing dreadful, 'quite ill with want of sleep and grief, and these people harass and frighten me till I feel as if I should lose my senses. Who will protect me from them?'"

"She should have appealed to the nearest magistrate."

"In the middle of the night, an' neither she nor me knew where he was to be found?" objected Sarah. "An' them downstairs always on the watch, too; an' givin' me orders to let 'em know directly, in a minute, if she stirred to leave her room. Such a big, masterful man the gentleman was! snapped you most in half if you only looked at him."

"It was a difficult position," Rollo admitted. "Could you not have spoken to the hotel-keeper?"

"The very thing as we ought to have done, and what I should ha' 'vised myself, for they're most respectable, well-conducted people; but then, they'd gone to London for a day or two, so you see we couldn't."

"Then what did you do?"

"Why, Miss Vera cried, and begged me not to leave her. She said if I could get her away—so I did it."

"Helped her to evade these people? And successfully?"

"Hid her for two nights and a day at my old aunt's, and then came here with her. They were advertising for servants for this house, and as I was known in the neighbourhood, and of good character, I got the place, and here we've been ever since."

"With Mrs. Cheltnam's knowledge and consent?"

The rhododendrons were agitated now, and from out their deep shadows glided the slender figure and fair face so deeply impressed on Rollo's memory.

"Your question, sir," she cried, "makes me keenly feel that I must not remain here any longer. I have wronged Mrs. Cheltnam, for the Belgium nuns in the convent school where my dearest father placed me, had made me proficient in all domestic matters, and I could teach this good, kind Sarah all she had not learnt. But we have only used this as an asylum, in which to hide from my cousin and his mother, till I could ascertain the addresses of some of papa's old friends, and I know I am not justified either in remaining under Mrs. Cheltnam's roof without her knowledge, nor in asking her to interest herself in my difficulties."

"That's why I says to Miss Vera the gintleman stopping in the house is a lawyer, meaning you, sir! let's hear what he's got to propose."

"Have you any reason to fear that these relations are still searching for you?"

"Yes," she replied with a sob. "Sarah just discovered that after seeking me in London, they have gone back to Dover. As they insist that they are acting on authority given them by my father, what am I to do if they succeed in finding me?"

"Are you not of age?"

"I shall be in a few days; a week at the most."

"Then do nothing hastily," Rollo advised, "but stay quietly here for the present, and trust me, they will have to give very convincing proofs of the legality of their proceedings before they shall be allowed to remove you without your consent."

The heartfelt thanks this speech elicited were very gratifying, and before Mr. Cheltnam quitted his new client, she had provided him with the names of half-a-dozen men of good position who had been on intimate terms with her father, the late Mr. Estridge, before his passion for hunting and exploring led him to join an expedition to Central Africa, where he fell a victim to fever.

Rollo's last promise, as he said good-night to Vera Estridge, was that he would go to London early on the morrow, and hunt up the said old friends till he found one capable of, and willing to accept the guardianship of the lonely orphan, and with this promise she was well content.

Mrs. Cheltnam stared, and marvelled, and murmured,

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when she found her brother-in-law on the point of starting for the rail before she found time to overwhelm him with commissions, calling him back when he was actually *en route* to assure him that unless he returned in twenty-four hours she should die with ennui and dread of the house being entered by burglars.

"Perhaps I ought to have taken Cissie into my confidence," he mused. "She must have been charmed with Miss Estridge, and all women love a spice of romance; but then she is so helpless, so brainless, that she might have been a clog on our movements instead of a help. On second thoughts, it will be more prudent to keep her in the dark."

And with this decision Rollo Cheltnam dismissed his sister-in-law from his mind, and dreamed and dwelt only on the sweetness and wrongs of Vera Estridge, and the gratifying post to which he had been elected of her defender.

* * * * *

Rollo had planned to dispatch his business in town and return speedily, in case the dreaded enemy had tracked the fugitives as surely as Sarah's friend's had warned her that they were certain to do, sooner or later.

From his conversation with Vera, he had gathered that, some time since, her father had forbidden her intimacy with these relatives; for what reasons she knew not; but it surprised her very much when they came to the convent where her education had been carried on, professing it was by Mr. Estridge's dying injunctions, communicated through the servant who was with him in his last moments, that they came to take upon themselves the charge of his only child.

Not till they had induced her to start for England with them—not till she was weak and ill with the effects of a rough passage, yet shrinking in much disgust from the lover-like attentions forced upon her—had she learned that this man was making arrangements for their marriage; the ten thousand pounds that formed her inheritance being doubtless his attraction, and his ambitious mother doing all in her power to further his plans.

That she must be saved from such nefarious schemes, was a matter of course; but it was exasperating to find that of the four or five individuals, whose names Vera had supplied, only one—a certain Lady Dunsford, the widow of a general officer—was actually in England, and she was lying at her house at Kensington, too ill to be seen, or even to read a letter.

However, two of the others were expected home shortly from a tour in Canada, and if Vera's unworthy relatives could be kept at bay till Mr. and Mrs. Lemaitre landed in England, all would be well, as he remembered the young lady had expressed herself sure of a most loving welcome from them.

These researches took up time. Rollo left Borton Court early on Tuesday, but it was the afternoon of Thursday when he came once more in sight of his sister-in-law's temporary abode.

Mrs. Cheltnam, who was writing in the drawing-room, started and screamed when he sprang in through the window. He was breathless with running; his coat torn with forcing his way through a gap, and his looks so disordered, that she began to ply him with questions.

How should he tell her that the same train that brought him back to Borton Court had also conveyed a tall, unpleasant-looking man whose name he had read on the small portmanteau he carried—"Silas Estridge."

He had watched this man take possession of the only vehicle in the station yard, and had then rushed off, bent on reaching Borton Court by short cuts and field paths before him.

From the top of a hill he had caught sight of Silas Estridge, and he was not coming alone; two roughly-dressed fellows were with him, and who could doubt that if Vera resisted, she would be dragged away by force?

He must seek and save her; but here was Cissie barring the way. How should he shake her off? Unless she could be persuaded to promise silence she would admit that Sarah Colby was in her employ, and further revelations would soon follow.

"Do not question me now," he implored, "there is not a moment to be lost. The truth is, a posse of villainous rascals are now within a hundred yards of us, and I suppose I ought to explain——"

"Pooh! you are too late with your explanations, Mr. Rollo," she interrupted. "No thanks to you for keeping me in the dark so long; but Vera has told me all about it. Yes, Vera herself. Darling Alfie was seized with croup the night after you went away, and with no one here but those stupid maids, I'm sure the child must have died, and I should have gone to a lunatic asylum if Vera had not come to me. Oh, she's a dear! and we are the best of friends. As for that wretch, let him touch her if he dare! She is under my protection now."

And Mrs. Cheltnam drew up her tiny figure, and swelled and strutted about the room, till Rollo could have laughed, if he had not been full of thankfulness for her timely aid.

Vera, too, came quickly to her side, pale and trembling, but placing every confidence in her new friends and their assurances that not even the dying injunctions of a parent could give Silas Estridge authority to remove her from Borton Court.

A few minutes, and the object of her dread and dislike was ushered into the room. Vera could scarcely sustain herself. Rollo stood beside her frowning and defiant, but Mrs. Cheltnam, with smiling self-possession, greeted her visitor.

She believed she had had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Estridge somewhere, some time since. She could not remember at whose house, her memory was so defective; but she was sure she recognised the likeness in that lady's son. Now, was it in England they met? Did Mr. Estridge like England with its horrid climate? What a day it was for a journey! He must be parched with dust, and she was afraid their sherry was not of the best; but such as it was——

She pulled the bell, and it was with difficulty he could evade her hospitable attentions, and cross the room to where Vera was sitting. And even then he found Mrs. Cheltnam still beside her.

"If you are here, Mr. Estridge," she said, pleasantly, "with any cruel idea of robbing me of my guest, I forbid it. I shall not be able to spare her just at present."

There was an ugly smile on Silas Estridge's coarse, sensual mouth, and he answered with a cynical deliberation that made Rollo impulsively clench his hand, and Mrs. Cheltnam comprehend why Vera feared him.

"You are most kind! I am so sorry I cannot accept your generous hospitality for this foolish, this mistaken

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child; but, unfortunately, she must go to London with me at once."

"There is no must where a lady is concerned," Cissie told him. "I cannot consent to let Vera go, and, frankly, my dear sir, I will not."

Mr. Estridge threw up his hands deprecatingly.

"It is not I, my dear madam, who would dream of opposing your wishes. I am merely here to give Vera the support of my presence. She will travel in the custody of these men," and he pointed to them as they stood at the open door.

"Custody?" repeated Rollo, furiously; and Mr. Estridge eyed him with covert malice.

"Alas, yes! My mother, I grieve to say, has been robbed of some valuable ornaments. They were in a travelling bag, to which no one but her niece had access, and in anger she has sworn an information against——. Officers, this young lady is the Vera Estridge mentioned in your warrant. This is your prisoner."

Then his villainy had triumphed. Knowing that he was powerless to force her into his arms in any legitimate way he had obtained her arrest, and only by suing to him for mercy, and consenting to become his wife, could she escape the horror of imprisonment—the degradation of a public trial.

Even Mrs. Cheltnam looked aghast till Rollo hurriedly whispered:

"Time, I must have more time!" and then her courage revived.

After pertinaciously questioning Silas Estridge till he was crimson with suppressed rage, she affected to believe that the charge must be well-founded, but firmly refused to let Vera's trunk be packed, or Vera herself taken away from the house, till she had ascertained that none of her valuables were missing. Drawers were searched and boxes ransacked for certain articles of jewellery that Mrs. Cheltnam insisted on having lost, and she bewailed their disappearance so naturally, and screamed so delightedly when they were found, that the policemen were hoodwinked and Silas Estridge, eager to get his prisoner away, fretted and fumed in vain.

He declined the lunch brought in, but drank copious draughts of the sherry, which Mrs. Cheltnam still disparaged, while his followers, leaving him in charge of their prisoner, went to the kitchen where Sarah Colby heaped their plates with viands, and placed between them a huge brown jug of ale, so delicious that they were in no hurry to leave it.

As for Vera she was passive, afraid to hope, yet confident that both Rollo and his sister-in-law were to be depended upon; and if, when the carriage was brought to the door that was to convey her to the station, she cast a wild look of appeal on both, their smiles revived her courage.

Silas Estridge, his face flushed, his movements none the steadier for the liquor he had been imbibing, would have drawn her hand through his arm, whispering triumphantly that she could not escape him now.

But he was seized from behind. Another train had just arrived from London, bringing with it two of the chief officials from Scotland Yard; gentlemen with whom Rollo Cheltnam had been in consultation before leaving London, and whom a telegraphic message had now brought to his assistance.

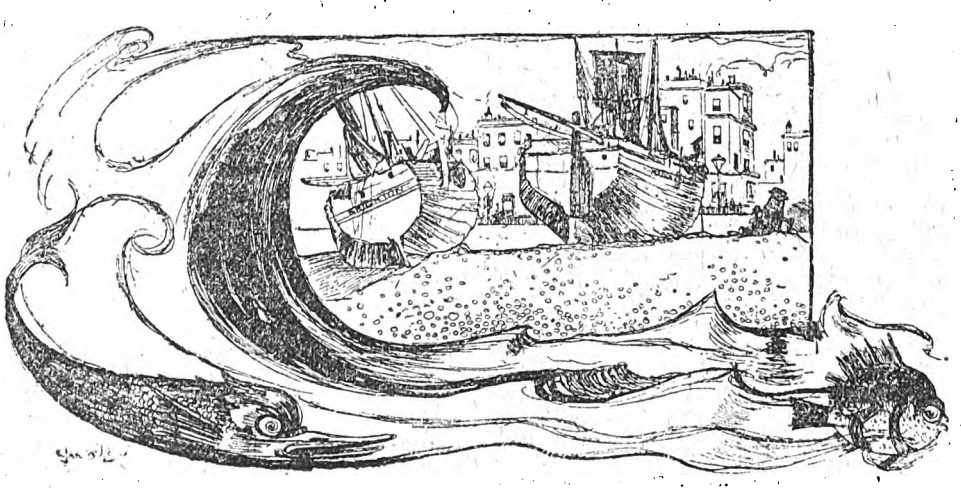
To the dismay of the schemer, he found himself under arrest for the attempted abduction of Miss Estridge, for whose appearance to answer the charge of robbery, if persisted in, bail was speedily found.

Need we say it was not persisted in. The morrow brought Mrs. Estridge to Borton Court, confessing her own guilt, and pleading for the forgiveness of her son.

Cissie always asserts that both Vera and Rollo owed a great deal to her presence of mind and quick-wittedness, and they not only admit this, but regard her as their dearest friend.

Vera is still at Borton Court, Rollo still a frequent visitor, and it has a significant appearance that whenever he is expected she may be found in the kitchen helping Sarah Colby prepare certain delicate dishes he has been heard to praise, and wearing the pale pink gown in which he whispers that he loves her best.

Louis Chalmers.



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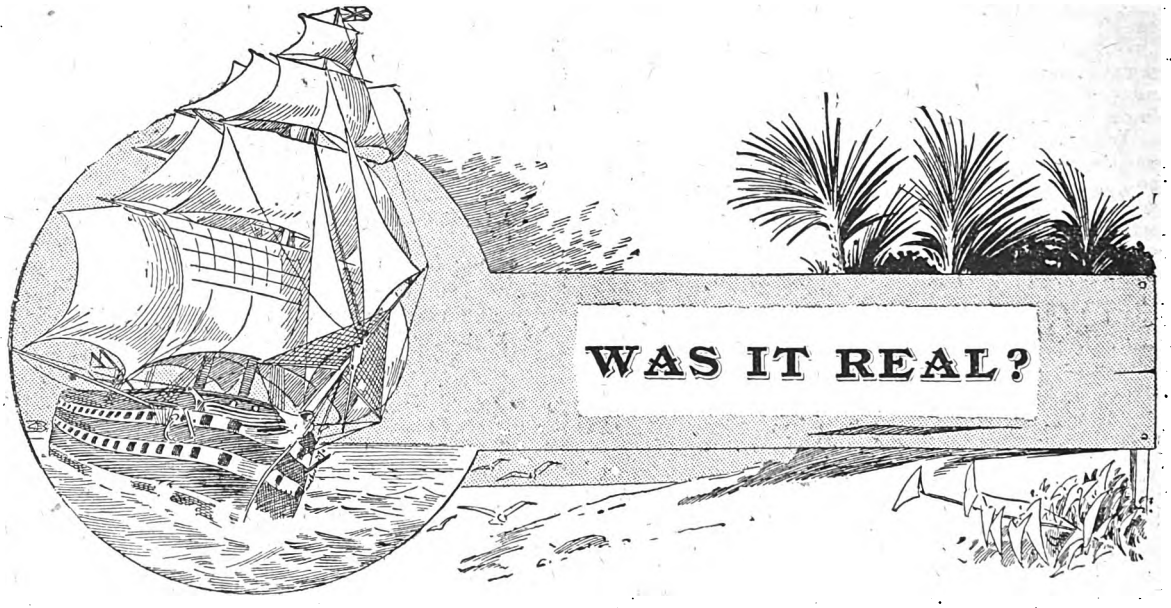

WAS IT REAL?

"I SOMETIMES think that all reality is a dream," said the Countess.

"And that we shall wake up some day and wonder at its vividness," said the journalist.

"And forget all those details which make the greatest impression on us while we are dreaming," I suggested.

We had finished dinner, and had drawn round the blazing log fire. The shutters had not been closed, and as I sat outside the semicircle, close by the Countess' elbow, I watched the heavy bands of fleecy clouds which a northwest wind was driving across the face of the moon.

The subject had been started by the doctor, who had volunteered a ghost story, and this had led to a discussion, in the course of which it transpired that we all had just a tinge of superstition in our compositions. All, with one exception—for Mrs. Grimstone had not spoken.

I had observed, however, that while apparently gazing into the fire and devoting all her attention to the sparks which now and then sailed up as the wood crackled and shifted in the grate, she was listening intently to the remarks being made, and as the Countess ventured the dogma chronicled above I gathered by the change in the expression of the face opposite me she was about to break silence with a purpose.

"I cannot say that I agree with you," said Mrs. Grimstone, in that sweet, subdued voice of hers, "but it has more than once occurred to me that many dreams are reality, and that some deficiency in our perceptions causes us to think them unreal."

"My dear Margaret" replied the Countess, "whatever brought you to think such a thing?"

"That involves the telling of a story," said Mrs. Grimstone. "I cannot tell you what it is. I could only relate to you the circumstances and leave you to classify them for yourselves. And, I do not know that I should care to tell it."

"You are very cruel to thus excite our appreciation in order only to disappoint us," cried the journalist, who never lost a possible opportunity of acquiring copy.

"And wasted a perfect *mise en scène* for a mystery tale," put in the Countess. "See, the fire is going down; we are in semi-darkness. Listen to the wind: it is blowing a gale. We shall find some trees down in the morning, and there's your moon ready to give a finishing touch to the picture."

"It is manifestly ordained that you should hold us spellbound," I pleaded.

Thus appealed to, she turned her beautiful pale face towards us as though with an effort, and appeared to debate within herself before refusing our request. But suddenly her face brightened.

"I will tell you the story if you would really like to hear it," she said, "but it is not a pleasant one for me. It has been the bane of my life for fifteen years."

Then she paused awhile, and, turning her face towards the Countess, she settled herself on the low seat as we all instinctively drew in a little and prepared to listen intently.

"Most of you are doubtless acquainted with the circumstances of my husband's death. Such things are not easily forgotten. It is close on twenty years ago since it happened.

"But you are probably not aware of the reasons for his having committed the fatal act. It is necessary that I should refer to them. The subject is a most painful one, as you will understand. He took his own life rather than suffer disgrace. We were comparatively poor, and had losses! and in a mad moment my husband had got into the clutches of a usurer.

"He had met the man at the house of an acquaintance. He was an elderly man, with a very long white beard. I took such a strong dislike to him the first time we met that I avoided him as far as I could whenever he fell in my way. He was evidently well-to-do, and lived in good style, though exhibiting intense vulgarity in all his surroundings. He was always talking about himself and the many influential people he knew, and was most objectionably familiar with every woman he came across.

"He was altogether the most loathsome person I have ever met; and, to make his appearance especially disagreeable, he had a peculiar wen-like protuberance on his throat under the chin. It was like a turkey's wattle, and

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it was evidently to hide this that he wore so long a beard."

We sat motionless as Mrs. Grimstone paused in her recital. Her story had already engrossed our attention, and the well-chosen words in which she told it were almost fascinating in their simplicity.

"Well, my husband borrowed £500 of him. I never saw the papers he signed, and could never find out what the terms were, but I do know that in the course of four weary years of harrowing suffering and constant slow torture he succeeded in squeezing more than six hundred out of my husband in constant instalments and forfeits on account of interest alleged to be due, while the original bill remained in the usurer's hands. The fiend used often to come and see my husband, and when he was out insisted on seeing me. And he used to keep reminding me during his hateful visits that he could ruin my husband and sell my home if he liked.

"I did not dare tell my husband what had happened, for fear of what he might do. Nor did I then realise what was occurring. But too late I found that one day upon leaving our house the villain had written to my husband to say that unless the full amount of the bill were paid forthwith he would ruin him.

"George shot himself that night."

She paused a moment, but the only emotion she showed betrayed itself in the increased brightness of her eyes, which seemed to be flashing in the dim light.

"He left two letters, written the afternoon of that day. One was addressed to the man who murdered him, the other to me. In my letter he explained that the course he had taken was the only one possible to save me from disgrace. He reasoned that the villain would not dare to sue his executors for money which had already been more than repaid.

"And the event proved he was right. The murderer had the infamy to send a wreath of flowers with his card to my house.

"That was twenty years ago. Ethel was yet a child, and she was my only comfort. I left England and lived quietly in Switzerland for four years. We came back just before the unexpected death of my cousin, and I succeeded to the property too late to enjoy it.

"But Ethel was growing up and I had to go about for her sake; and thus it was that we went to join the house party at Mrs. Braid's. You all know her place and what a curious assortment of people one meets there. We found the Chase rather full and sat down twenty to dinner. But the gaiety of the party and the constant round of entertainment amused Ethel, and I did not regret having come.

"On the second day we went with a merry party for a drive, and on the homeward journey one of the horses fell and broke its knee; so we were delayed and had to walk back four miles, only getting home just in time for dinner; and when we got into the drawing-room the visitors were already going out.

"There had been some fresh arrivals in the afternoon, and my attention was claimed by an old acquaintance, who took me into dinner. I didn't see who it was took Ethel, but I just saw the butterfly in her hair as she went into the room.

"The dinner was better than usual, but I had no appetite and felt indisposed. An overwhelming wave of depression had suddenly descended on me. It was quite useless fighting against it.

"I hurried out of my room at the earliest moment, and went upstairs, threw myself on my bed, and gave way to a hysterical fit of weeping.

"This relieved me, and after an hour or so I went downstairs and entered the drawing room. My absence had not been noticed. I found the gentlemen had been in some time. Someone had been playing, and everybody seemed to be in high spirits.

"'Who is that old gentleman your daughter is talking to?' asked a friend.

"I glanced round the room and saw Ethel seated at a table, idly turning over an album of views, as she chatted with her father's murderer!

"I had great difficulty in keeping my self-possession. My first impulse was to do something dreadful. Then it occurred to me that this man, though morally the murderer of my husband, was legally a tower of commercial probity; an ornament to the city, you know. I could not charge him with any crime, and to have made a scene would have been extremely ill-bred, and have served to rake up the forgotten tragedy in my life. But to see Ethel confidentially talking to the man—taking an evident pleasure in his companionship—was too frightful.

"So I told my friend that I did not know who the person was, and tried to catch Ethel's attention, to beckon her to me. But she was so engrossed in her conversation that I could not.

"Finally I sent word to Ethel that I wanted her. She appeared surprised at my message, but rose and came to me not looking best pleased at being separated from an amusing companion. 'He is so very funny,' she remarked, 'so vulgar and so conceited, and he talks about nothing but his set, and the upper-ten. I never met anything so grotesque.'

"I thought it wisest not to tell her anything, and so explained that I thought it would be nice if we were to take a walk in the grounds. It was a perfect night, and full moon. My proposal was agreed to, and we went out and strolled down the avenue and under the beeches.

"That night I undressed, but felt that I could not go to sleep, so I took a book and began to read. But my attention kept wandering, and I found myself seeing an old man's face with a white beard. And the wicked black eyes stared at me, and the bushy white eyebrows contracted, until at length I felt I could stand it no longer, and, flinging down my book, I went into the next room to seek the companionship of Ethel.

"She was in bed and asleep. I stood by the bed and admired her face. It bore the impression of such simplicity and sweetness—remember it is fifteen years ago that I am speaking of.

"Ethel was sleeping peacefully, and I hesitated to rouse her. And as I stood by her bedside pondering I heard a soft rustling sound over by the heavy wardrobe. I started, and turned and saw what I had not noticed before, a small piece of something white on the floor

"I went across the room and picked it up. It was a piece of paper folded up small, and it had just been put under the door leading to the corridor.

"I felt overcome with agitation. I tried the door and found that Ethel had locked it. This reassured me. I went quietly back into my own room, opened the paper under the light and read its contents.

"It was an assignation for that night. Unsigned, but plain enough for me. It gave instructions as to the meeting-place—the last door on the left of the corridor by the oriel window."

The speaker hesitated, and, turning her face for the first time away from us, peered into the glowing embers in the sinking fire. Then she resumed, appearing to obtain inspiration from her reverie.

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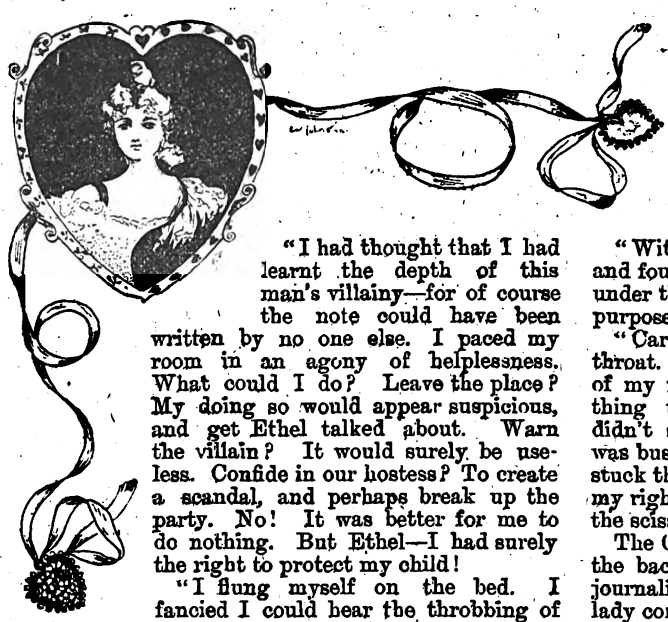

"I had thought that I had learnt the depth of this man's villainy—for of course the note could have been written by no one else. I paced my room in an agony of helplessness. What could I do? Leave the place? My doing so would appear suspicious, and get Ethel talked about. Warn the villain? It would surely be useless. Confide in our hostess? To create a scandal, and perhaps break up the party. No! It was better for me to do nothing. But Ethel—I had surely the right to protect my child!

"I flung myself on the bed. I fancied I could hear the throbbing of my temples. I thought such thoughts as I dare not recall. I conjured up expedients such as are only possible to a desperate woman. I cannot tell how long I lay thus. But when I looked at my watch it pointed to 1.30. I read the note again. It named two o'clock.

"Then I had a new idea. And as it matured in my brain I felt I should act on it. My mind was made up; I would end the tension and protect my child.

"I rose and quietly unlocked the door. I peered out along the corridor. All was still. I went out and closed the door without making a sound. I turned toward the great oriel window, through which the moonbeams fell in brilliant opalescent tints upon the oaken floor. I paused involuntarily, roused by the peaceful beauty of the vista closed in many yards away by that wonderful window.

"Then I crept along on tiptoe, until I had reached the end. I noticed by a glimmer under the last door that there was still a light burning in the room. I paused a moment, nerved myself for the effort I was about to make.

"Cautiously I grasped the handle tightly, and slowly turned it—so slowly as not to make the slightest sound. And then I opened the door and peeped in.

"It was his room. The murderer stood with his back to me before a swing glass; he was dressed in his dinner things. He held a pair of scissors in his hand, with which he was trimming his beard.

"It was the opportunity of a lifetime. My opportunity! And I took it! I ran at him, and before he knew that he was not alone, I had seized him by the throat.

"He didn't call out. He hadn't time. With all the strength of a madwoman I stuck my fingers into his neck until I felt the muscles give. And then I pulled him down until he came on his back, my knees on his chest, and my nails dug deep into his flesh.

"Slowly his features became more and more distorted. His eyes opened wider and wider. His face turned paler even than ever. Then suddenly it began to swell. His eyes became prominent, and his tongue found its way through his teeth, and he had ceased to attempt to struggle. Still clutching at his throat, I glanced round. We were quite alone, he and I, and his reckoning had come.

"Then I saw the scissors he had held, lying by his side. It appeared providential. I renounced the hold of one hand, watching him carefully the while. But he didn't move, and his face grew more livid, more swollen and more hideous every second.

"Without removing my gaze, I felt for the scissors and found them. I grasped them firmly. I passed them under the long white beard. But I could not effect my purpose with one hand.

"Carefully, grudgingly, I withdrew the other from his throat. Still he didn't move, but I noticed the imprint of my fingers on his neck. Then I touched the horrid thing that had caused me disgust so often. But it didn't shock me now. I had a mission to perform and was busy. I held the thing in my left hand, and then stuck the pointed blade of the scissors through it with my right. As I did so the body twitched. Then I closed the scissors quickly."

The Countess drew her breath convulsively, and I felt the back of her chair shake as she shuddered. The journalist covered his face with his hands. But the little lady continued to gaze at the embers and went on in her silvery voice.

"I rose and looked at my work. I felt light-hearted, for my husband was avenged and my daughter protected. And I was quite joyous as I watched a little wavy line of red creep down the embroidered shirt, tinting the diamond stud on its way, until it began to add a new hue to the faded carpet.

"I approved my work and felt relieved. And then I turned to go. And as I did so I recognised that my Nemesis had overtaken me.

"I was about to leave the room, and was already at the door. I half involuntarily turned to take one last look at my work, and, struck by the hideousness of the bloated features—for they had swollen almost immediately—I returned, and taking a towel from the horse, I covered the face up. Then I saw his features peering at me from out the looking glass by which he had stood when I seized him.

"My heart stood still, I looked again. There, all agog with a look of horror in his face; there, as though in the act of falling backward, was the counterfeit of the thing which now lay on the floor. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. I dug my nails into my flesh, and yet it peered. I took my handkerchief and rubbed the mirror. But the ghastly features still fixed me with their gaze.

"Then I became desperate. On the dressing table were a pair of heavy silver candlesticks. I staggered across the room, and, seizing one, with all my might I dashed it at the mirrored head.

"There was a crash. The glass cracked from its centre in all directions, and the great plate flew in a thousand fragments, covering the thing which lay at its base; and I noticed that every little splinter had its portion of counterfeit presentment upon it.

"Then I lost consciousness. Nor do I remember anything more until I found myself in bed, with Ethel, fully dressed, bending over me.

"I was puzzled to find her appearing anxious about me, and her answers only surprised me the more. I learnt from her that she had been awakened shortly after

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one o'clock by my talking in my sleep. She had come to me, but could not rouse me. She remained by my side, and she related how for more than an hour I had muttered and tossed about as if I had been in a high fever. Then I had become quieter and dropped into a heavy sleep. Poor Ethel had sat dosing in my room all night, and was much terrified, as you may imagine.

"And then I realised that it had all been a dream. But it was so vivid that every little detail was engraved on my memory.

"But I dared not speak of what I had dreamed; so I said I had had a nightmare, and could not recall what it was about, and got up and dressed."

"A most horrible dream it was," said the Countess. "I don't ever remember having been so interested."

"It was enough to destroy one's reason," said the journalist.

"But, after all," I added, "it was only a dream."

"There is a little more to be told," said Mrs. Grimstone. "It was, as you say, only a dream. But I have not yet told you the end. Owing to my having slept so late, we did not get down to breakfast until most of the others had finished, and we took ours in company with two or three other late risers, whom we did not know very well.

"As soon as we had finished we went into the great hall to see what the arrangements were. I did not feel very well after my bad night, and hoped there would be a driving party. We found a knot of men in the hall discussing something of evident importance. As we appeared the men separated, and several came to meet us with the usual greetings. But I had seen enough to know there was something very interesting and important going on; so I took young Balmain's arm and led him down the steps to the terrace and asked him if there was any startling news.

"He endeavoured to evade the question, but on my pressing him he owned that there was.

"'The fact of the matter is,' he said, 'if you really want to know, that something has happened to one of our party. At least as he was staying in the house, I suppose he was one of our party. An old gentleman, he has died suddenly.'

"The news didn't startle me in the least, neither did it shock me.

"'Died, you say?' I remarked. 'What did he die of?'

"'Pon my word I can't say,' replied Mr. Balmain. 'He didn't come down to breakfast. And one of the maids said she had been knocking at his door for half an hour and couldn't get any answer. So the butler went up and broke his door open and found him dead.'

"'Or murdered,' I suggested.

"'What makes you say that?' he replied. 'No,' he added, after a pause. 'He wasn't murdered because his door was locked on the inside and his windows were shut and fastened. But if you really want to know, I am told he committed suicide.'

"I felt overcome, but curiosity got the better of me. I felt I must know everything.

"'How did he kill himself?' I demanded.

"'The butler tells me he cut his throat with a pair of scissors,' he said, with a shudder, 'and it's a most extraordinary thing that he didn't rouse the whole house, for as he fell he knocked over a glass, which is broken into bits. It must have made a terrific noise. But then the next room was empty, which I suppose accounts for it.'

"That is all," added Mrs. Grimstone, as we sat without breaking silence. "The necessary forms were gone through, of course, with due consideration to our feelings.

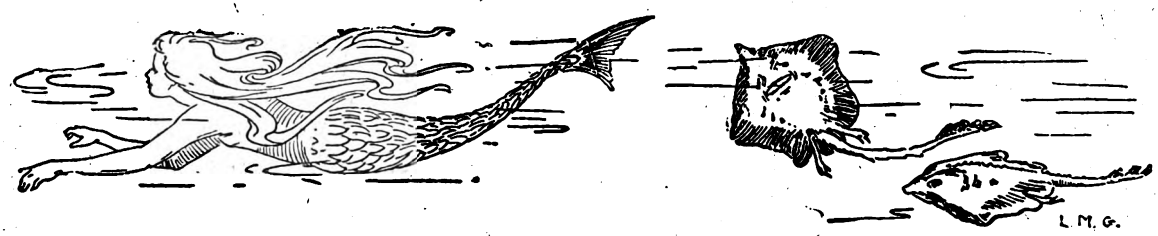
"The body was removed to the village inn, where it was shown beyond doubt that Mr. Joseph—that was his name—had accidentally cut himself with a sharp pair of scissors while trimming his beard. This was proved beyond question by the fragments of white hair they found on the floor, and the scissors which were discovered still lying beside the body, and everybody was satisfied.

"I could not bring myself to go to the Chase for years after that night. But just after Ethel's marriage I was lonely and was persuaded to go and stay with Mrs. Braid for a while. She is a sort of distant connection on my mother's side, you know.

"It was on the second night of my visit, I happened to be in the library and took down a book which was placed on the shelf upside down. The gilt being reversed caught my eye, and I took the book out of its place, and turned it. It was the assignation I had picked up in Ethel's room that awful night. I have it still.

"Then the question struck me with its full force. How much of that night's work was reality, and how much of it a dream? Was it mere imagination on my part, or was it——"

Alfred Mayer.



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THE REALITY OF LOVE.

SUCH a still, beautiful morning! How slowly the sun rose from a couch of crimson! How lazily the one white gauzy cloud floated against the blue of the bending sky, borne aimlessly on by the slow breath of sleeping zephyr, that slept on, nor listed to the love-whispers among the green maples of my garden.

How utterly happy I was! How fair were the white roses bending under their fragrant heaviness of dew!

We had been married two months. Two moons, Douglass called them. We had been away in the mountains, and then my husband had brought me here on the green banks of the beautiful Thames. He had given me this home.

Those fine, straight trees, these lovely flowers, even the very birds and the squirrels were mine, and this great dog with his cold nose thrust into my hand and his brown pathetic eyes following every glance of mine.

I loved Dante, the dog.

I worshipped Douglass, my husband.

I dare say we all of us worship some deity. With some it is a yellow god which men call gold and which women barter their souls for; at other times it is the many-coloured butterfly, Fame, which even hoary-headed men chase about like boys.

Sometimes it is some great being we have conjured from the many myths of the dead past and clothed with a perfection, allied to, but often less than, the perfection of the best man who crossed the orbit of our youth.

When it is this being, classic as Faun, beautiful as Apollo, and omniscient as Proteus, we build a house for his worship and cause exquisite music to be sounded in his honour, and speak aloud words of praise and endearment to him.

And it was somewhat so with me.

My innocence was the church, my love words were his music, and my caresses were as prayers.

And so those two moons had risen, crescented, and fulled, lagged in their coming and gone out in the darkness of night, and we had always been together until this morning.

He had left me for a few hours. It was the first time I had been quite alone with my great joy to look it in the face.

Nor was I quite alone now, for there was Dante, the dog, and there were the birds—my birds—and the white roses and the squirrels in the high trees running about and speaking to each other almost in words.

It was my happiest hour.

All the fears, uncertainties, and perturbations which beset the bride had vanished one by one under the warm tender love of my husband as frost melts under the gentle warmth of a vernal sun; and now love at its fullest and surest and sweetest was ours.

Ah, those dear last hours in the garden with the grave dog, Dante, walking slowly at my side!

Then I grew restless, for you see I had become so used to my joy I was ready to share it again with Douglass.

I wandered into the house.

I prowled about the library. This had been my husband's house some years before he gave it to me.

One of the Fates must have tempted me to fit that key in that lock and open the desk and untie the portfolio and find those love letters from some woman of whom I had never heard.

And to think he had been married before I ever saw him, and had put away a wife to take me!

Some other girl's brown head had rested on his dear breast. The soft arms of some other woman had been about his neck. Red lips had kissed him, as mine had kissed him.

I lived over each hour of our wedded life, but imagined the unknown woman in my place through it all. What torture!

Then I fell on the floor in a swoon, for you see I had never been a very strong girl, and the terrible agony nearly killed me. I think it would have killed me but for the dog—Dante—who licked my face and fastened his strong white teeth in my pretty *robe de maison* and dragged me to the open door, where the fresh, rose-laden air revived me a little, and there the old servant found me and put me to bed, and the doctor came and I——. Well, I remembered no more for long weeks.

I had brain fever, and they say the dog would stand beside me with real tears falling from his brown eyes when I was so near to death.

That was a long time ago.

Yes, he says it was wrong to keep it from me, but he thought it best.

And it seems that she rejected him because, in her fickleness, she fell in love with another.

He had forgiven her, and he had never looked with love on another woman since, till he met me on that frosty Valentine's Day and began to woo me.

And the other woman had been dead five years. You see, Douglass is much older than I am. And I honour him for his constancy.

And the dog, Dante?

He seems gayer than he used, but he likes better than anything to sit beside the cradle, and when baby moves in his sleep he swings him gently till he is quiet again.

AGNES RAYNE.

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- A PRIZE OF -

£1,000 FOR A "S.S." READER.

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THE BIGGEST PRIZE EVER OFFERED FOR SO SIMPLE A TASK.

Turn to Page 349 for the Coupon.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtained this copy of "S.S." to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25**, and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for the boys, and £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

THIS PRIZE IS OFFERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP." AND "PASTIMES."

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Mademoiselle Gotte.

"No; I ask your Majesty's pardon, but that is not right at all. Gotte is a respectable girl, but a terrible flirt, who is trying to tease her lover. For that reason the gestures must be livelier, and there should be more pettishness shown when the soubrette throws down her embroidery, 'There, your ruffles can wait before I touch them again.' Remember, madam, that it is defiance thrown to the valet Lafleur, who, by-the-way, takes it quite unconcernedly."

"Well, my dear Dazincourt, and how is it that you say nothing to me? Did I not get through my grand tirade very well?"

"Perfectly, monseigneur; I have nothing but praise to give you. Your highness carries a napkin over your arm with an ease that would make the valets of the Comedie Française wild with envy."

"One would think that I had served at the tables of grand seigneurs all my life; is it not so, Antionette?"

"Do not ask me, my brother d'Artois, I am positively jealous. You get all the praise, while for me there is nothing but scolding. Is it my fault that I am poor in my *rôle?* Elizabeth will tell you that I do not know it yet, and, besides, M. Campan discourages me."

From the depths of the orchestra, plunged in darkness, comes a big voice and a hearty laugh.

"Do not hunt for any more excuses, Antionette. M. Dazincourt is right; you are too imposing, too majestic. If the *rôle* of queen is familiar to you, that of soubrette is somewhat of a novelty."

The actress thus spoken to, leaned over the footlights.

"Do not be afraid, sire, I shall do better, I am sure. And while Elizabeth and Madame de Podignax are rehearsing their scene I will go and study my part in the garden."

The reader has, perhaps understood that this is the theatre of the Trianon, where they are rehearsing the *Gageure Imprévue*, that pretty comedy of Sedaine's which has not grown old, and which we even yet listen to with pleasure. The actors on this occasion are Queen Marie Antionette, Madam Elizabeth, the Countess Diane de Polignac, and Counte d'Artois, and M. d'Adhemar. The public—the King of France, the only spectator admitted to these rehearsals. There is at this time in all France a rage after plays, and the Queen, too, has been seized with the contagion; so, at a short distance from the little Trianon, she had built a pretty little box of a theatre lined with blue velvet.

Lagrence had painted the ceiling, and Dazincourt, from the Comédie Française, was ordered by the first gentleman of the chamber to give his advice to the distinguished amateurs. They could not have made a better choice than this combination of actor and man of the world, who began life as secretary to the Marechal de Richelieu and who was honoured by the friendship of the Abbé de Vaisenon.

You should have seen the alert little provençal, with his laughing face and sparkling eyes, as he strode the stage of the little theatre, and filled with scrupulous conscientiousness the functions of stage manager and instructor.

Simple mortals often get headaches when they are annoyed, and the Queen of France had certainly the right to feel vexed after so unsatisfactory a rehearsal. With heightened colour, then, she went at a rapid pace across the corner of the garden, bordered with orange trees—the only concession made to Lenotre's taste in the park of the Trianon. This time the daughter of Marie Therese did not wish to have it said, as one impertinent person had remarked, after the representation of the "Devin du Village," that it was played as badly as only royalty can play.

Book in hand, she earnestly studied her part, and is so completely absorbed that she nearly fell into a fountain from which arose a corpulent Silenus.

Decidedly, for the purpose of study, thought she, one would be better off in English gardens, since there is no chance of meeting anyone there.

Leaving on her left the hedges, the Queen crossed the little bridge thrown over the grotto, and passing on through the pavilion, where the Countesse Dubarry had often come to drink coffee with Louis XV., she entered the Swiss valley so full of attractive surprises.

Marie Antionette detested the straight walks of the Versailles park; and here nothing pleased her more than to fish in the pond, to see the cows milked, to run along the paths where chalets, temples, rivers, and lains were clustered within a space of forty acres at most. Rousseau had made pastoral simplicity the fashion, and in laying out these English gardens people imagined

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they were closely approaching Nature, while in reality nothing was ever more artificial.

While she walked the Queen continued to declaim her role.

"'My poor Lafleur, do not trouble yourself to reveal all the treasures of your mind; to madam you will never seem anything but a fool.' There, that time I caught the right intonation, and my severe professor himself——"

She stopped astonished, for from a neighbouring thicket a man suddenly arose. His head was bare, his cravat disordered, his clothes were covered with dust, and as he gazed at her with haggard eyes his appearance was by no means reassuring. In spite of that it was not fright that showed itself on Marie Antionette's face.

"What do you mean by walking here?" she asked in a haughty tone, quite different from that which Mdle. Gotte had just employed while teasing M. Lafleur.

"I am an unfortunate man who has no other recourse than death if no one takes pity on him."

The dejected appearance of the man, accorded so well with his words that the Queen continued in a softer tone:

"But did you not see the notice attached to the gates? 'By order of the Queen the public are forbidden to enter this inclosure.' How was it the Swiss guard let you come in here at all?"

"I did not ask permission; a man who has lost his head does not trouble himself much about Swiss guards. Let the Queen send me to prison if I have disobeyed her orders. They tell me, however, that she is good-hearted, and if I could only see her, who knows, perhaps I might find means to interest her. But there is no chance; no one ever sees the Queen but at a distance in royal robes of gold and silver, and covered with precious stones."

"So, you are quite sure of that?"

"Yes, indeed; just as sure as I am at this moment of seeing a charming little person in a white gown, a fichu of gauze, and a big straw hat, which in my opinion hides altogether too much of her pretty hair. In fact you inspire me with confidence, and it will perhaps soothe me if I tell you my troubles."

"Just as you would confide them to the Queen, I suppose."

"Exactly. Well, first you must know that I am a gentleman. I am called the Chevalier d'Orville—by the way, what is your name?"

An amusing idea suggested itself to the Queen. "Mdlle. Gotte, at your service," she said, with a courtesy.

"What a funny name. But come, confess, Mdlle. Gotte, that you took me just now for a robber, or at least a vagabond. I am sure my neglected toilet would suggest it, but I have little heart now for such things. Though don't forget that, while I have no claim to ride in the King's coaches, I am good and even of noble family.

"Long before the reign of Francis I. my family was founded in Dauphine, and we plume ourselves on being connected with Bayard, the chevalier, 'without fear and without reproach.' But no matter for that; I am poor enough now to give points to Job, and not a soul in the world is interested in me.

"Formerly an officer in the King's army, a wound rendered me unfit for service, and for the last four years I have begged in vain for a modest place as collector of taxes. But those in authority only laugh at me; and at the moment when I thought I had accomplished my purpose a luckier rival, who had powerful protectors, succeeded instead of the poor provincial. The Minister does me nothing but injustice."

"But, chevalier, do you not know that Ministers are created expressly for that purpose?"

"Hush, you foolish girl; do you dare say such things in the Queen's garden? Just suppose you should be overheard! Well, I endure my poverty after the fashion. I continue to vegetate, spending the night in copying music as M. Rousseau did, and ordinarily I do not complain; but this last misfortune is a little too much. I love and am loved by the prettiest girl named Lucette. She has wonderful eyes, a figure and a foot as small as that which I see within your rosetted slipper. Why do you blush, Mdlle. Gotte? I have no intention of offending you."

"Well," said the haughty Antionette, less offended in reality than d'Orville supposed, "you are not unhappy after all, since you are beloved. What prevents your marrying Mdlle. Lucette?"

"For the simple reason that she is no richer than I am, and her cruel mother pretends that she must marry a wealthy man. She would have been mine already had I suceeded in getting that appointment; but I am worse off now than ever. They gave me hope that I might be appointed Receiver of Taxes at Grenoble, my native village; but as I came out from an interview with the Minister a young clerk announced to me, with a malicious stare that the place had been already promised to a protégé of the Marechal de Luxembourg.

"And just think how unfortunate I am. The worst of all is that this intriguing rival of mine is also courting Lucette. There was left but one last resource for me, and that was to try and see M. Campan, the Queen's librarian, who was once a friend of the family. I rushed through the Rue des Reservoirs to the Trianon. M. Campan was not at the château, they told me he was walking in the park, where I would surely find him; but for an hour I have looked in vain, and I feel that all is lost.

"No doubt my rival will obtain Lucette's hand. Poor girl, she weeps in secret, but she does not dare to openly disobey her terrible mother. But I could not survive for her to be another's; and since both ambition and love fail me, I shall leave a world where honest men win nothing but contumely and disappointment."

"Listen, M. d'Orville, one should never give up hope for the future and abandon himself to despair. Perhaps I also have some credit at the Court as well as M. Campan, and I shall struggle if it be possible, against the influence of the Marechal de Luxembourg. Since you have confided in me, give me your petition and your service papers."

"What; you will? Ah, Mdlle. Gotte, my protectress, my good angel, it is Heaven itself that has brought about this meeting, and just, too, when I was on the point of upbraiding Providence. Now I understand; you are attached to the person of the Queen; you see her, you speak to her every day; it is she, I am sure, whom you hope to interest in my fate."

And as the pretended Gotte did not answer, he continued, sotto voce:

"Surely, my friend the chevalier, you are nothing but a fool; where are your wits? Don't you see the paper which she holds in her hands? Just now, too, I heard her declaiming as she walked. The thing is clear. The noble carriage of the head, this charming face, can belong to no one but one of the stars of the Comédie Française. Pardon me, mademoiselle, but I am a provincial who has never put foot in a theatre, and knows

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little more than the road from Grenoble to Versailles. How Lucette and I will bless you and pray for you till our dying days."

And the enthusiastic d'Orville threw himself on his knees, seized the pretty hand, which was covered with a silken mitten, and pressed upon it a fervent kiss.

Just at this moment one of the Trianon guards showed himself at the head of the walk, and the Queen quickly withdrew her hand. "I beg you not to seek to learn my name," she said. "Leave for Dauphine at once, and you will soon have news from me."

Thereupon she ran off; her pretty figure vanished among the thickets, while the chevalier stood immovable—stunned and dazed by such unhoped-for good luck.

The rehearsal was nearly ended, and they were waiting for the Queen to go over the scene which Dazincourt was not satisfied with. This time, however, everything went perfectly. A mischievous smile played on the beautiful red lips of the Austrian, and the prospect of making others happy brought brilliant light into the large grey eyes of the august soubrette.

"Bravo, Antionette!" cried the single spectator from the orchestra, "that is natural and lively; well done, indeed! Now we have an excellent Gotte. Do you not agree with me, Dazincourt?"

"Ah, sire, I only wish I had more pupils who possessed such prompt intelligence as that of her Majesty."

The Queen joyfully clapped her hands.

"Sire, since you are satisfied, let me beg a favour. I have something to ask of the Controller-General of your finances."

"The deuce! But, no matter, provided it is not too large a sum—for, you know, Antionette, the treasury is none too rich at present."

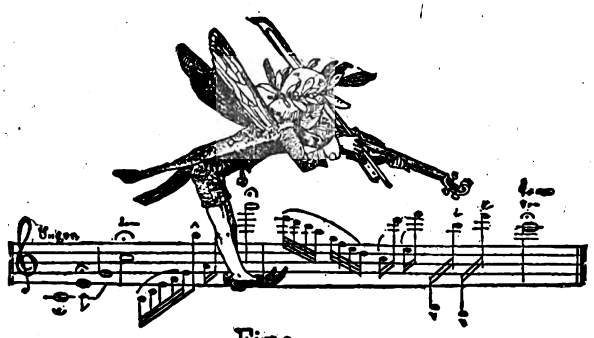
"It has nothing whatever to do with money, sire, and the matter is less important than you suppose. Will your Majesty accompany me to the hamlet? And while we walk I will tell you a story."

* * * * *

A change of scene.

No more artificial country, for once more Nature has regained her rights. A lonely ravine, in the neighbourhood of Grenoble, its steep sides dotted with pine-trees, while the River Isere rushes through with tempestuous waters amidst mossy and broken rocks. From the further bank of the river the mountain slopes down, and the village of Voreppe shows itself in the distance half revealing its scattered dwellings and smiling meadows.

Standing on the bridge thrown over the Isere, a man seems to be intently watching. It is the Chevalier d'Orville.



Fine.

Reaching home a week ago he has since tried in vain to obtain a rendezvous with Lucette.

But already dusk is veiling the rugged hillsides that mount toward the Grande-Chartreuse; one can no longer distinguish the road that branches from the king's highway, from Lyons to Grenoble, and loses itself in a deep gorge before it scales the height whereon stands the great monastry.

And still Lucette does not come. Is she, perhaps, afraid to trust him so late in this lonely spot? The chevalier is in deep despair, and is about to turn back when a shadow flits at a rapid pace across the wooden bridge.

At last it is she! And d'Orville rapidly advanced to greet his well-beloved.

"What has detained you so long?" he cried, as they exchanged greetings.

Quite out of breath the young girl threw herself on the mossy bank.

"At one time," she said, "I feared that I could not come at all. My mother was suspicious, and never lost sight of me for one moment. But the idea of causing you disappointment gave me courage at last. Pretending a slight headache, I went up early to my room. There I awaited the coming of night, and by the aid of a rope from the window, and the key of the garden which I had taken, I managed to escape."

"How can I thank you sufficiently, my darling? Nothing was wanted but your beloved presence to give me back hope. I can't describe to you what the separation has cost me. So, for pity's sake, let me kiss you once more."

"But would it be right now that all is changed? You must know that to-day your rival appeared at our house in a triumphant mood. He declared that he had obtained the place which meant so much to us, and nothing remains but to fix the day of the marriage. Alas! How can I, a feeble creature, resist the whole family? If I am alone here to-night, it is only that I must warn you of our coming misfortune. Be strong, be courageous, my dear d'Orville. Say to yourself that though they may constrain Lucette to this marriage, they can never take away her heart, that is beyond recall."

"Very well," said d'Orville angrily, "be as resigned as you please since it seems to come so easy to you, but for my part I cannot endure life without you. I know what is left for me to do."

"For pity's sake do not look at me with such angry eyes; do not speak to me in such a tone. What have I done to merit such severity?" she sorrowfully asked.

"Oh! pardon me, Lucette. My sorrow makes me unjust. I am wicked to torment you so, but if you only knew. I suffer all the more since for an instant I had a dream of happiness, and a ray of hope crossed my sad horizon. It is only a few days ago that in the park of the Trianon I met an unknown lady, to whom I related my trouble, and she of her own accord offered me her protection. She was so noble, so charming, she appeared so sincere that I readily trusted to her promises; but, alas, I see now that she has forgotten me entirely."

"How do you know that she is not still thinking of you? Wait a little before you abandon all hope, and above all, my dear d'Orville, promise me that you will make no attempt on your life."

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He did not answer, and she rested her trembling hand on his shoulder, caressing him with her look and murmuring such words as mothers use to soothe their children. Under the magnetic charm of her beloved voice and touch d'Orville felt, little by little, the keenness of his sorrow abate. After all, how delightful it was to roam thus hand in hand in the soft light of the rising moon.

At the gates of Grenoble they were forced at last to separate, and in spite of Lucette's prayers d'Orville passed the greater part of the night in writing letters and putting his papers in order, as if he were preparing to leave the world. Towards morning, harassed with fatigue and exhausted with emotion, he threw himself on the bed and slept heavily until the door of his room was noisily opened.

"Quick, M. d'Orville, open your eyes. Here is a letter and a package for you." And the worthy widow, proprietor of the hotel where d'Orville stayed, held out a large envelope bearing the Royal seal, and a box which seemed to contain jewels. Still half asleep the chevalier nonchalently broke the great red seal. After reading the enclosure d'Orville grew as pale as if he were about to faint, for the letter enclosed his commission as Receiver of Taxes at Grenoble, and the box a pair of beautiful diamond earrings that came from Boehmer, the Queen's jeweller. A paper folded within the box contained these words: "For Mademoiselle Lucette, from Mademoiselle Gotte."

Without thinking of his attire or his hostess, who fled dismayed, d'Orville sprang out of bed, and ten minutes later was at his loved one's door making a terrible noise. In a wrapper and night cap Lucette's mother presently put her head out of the window.

"Madame," cried the breathless chevalier, "I come to ask you for Mademoiselle Lucette's hand."

"What, again? You have the impudence to show yourself again here, when I forebade you to come near the house? Go on your way. My daughter is not intended for starvelings of your kind."

"But, madame, I am no longer a starveling; I have obtained the place of Receiver of Taxes, which you yourself made the condition of our marriage."

"You are an imposter, sir. You are too late. We saw only yesterday the real Receiver of Taxes, and it is he that will marry Lucette."

"Confound it. This is a little too much, madame. Open the door just for a minute, and I can prove the truth of what I say, for I have the commission in my pocket at this moment."

Lucette who had overheard this colloquy, quietly opened the door, and explanations were soon satisfactorily made. The ambitious mother no longer had reason to oppose her daughter's happiness.

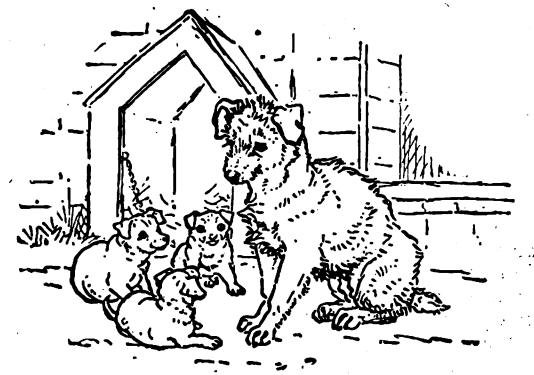
"It is very well, chevalier," said Lucette, while she tried on her beautiful earrings which her intended had brought with him; "there is still something wanting to my happiness, and that is not to be able to thank our generous benefactress, or even to know to whom to offer our thanks. Is it not too bad?"

"Don't distress yourself about that, my dear girl. As soon as we are married we will go to Paris, and I shall find means to discover Mdlle. Gotte at Versailles or the Trianon."

* * * * *

But the trip, postponed from day to day for various reasons, was not carried out.

The cares of the household soon absorbed Lucette's attention, and the Chevailier was too fond of his wife to leave her for any length of time.



The years rolled by, and the happy couple lived peaceably at Grenoble without perceiving the flight of time or the great changes that were taking place in the nation. In fact, they were approaching the last days of 1793. The King of France was dead on the scaffold, and the Queen Marie Antionette was waiting her fate in the prison of the Temple.

One evening the Chevalier d'Orville entered his home much excited.

"Here is grand news, Lucette," he said, "a relation of my mother's has just died and left me all the property. I must positively go to Paris to see about the inheritance, and now that our children are old enough to be left behind, you must not refuse to go with me. I know that the capital is not very gay just now, but we will not stay longer than is necessary to arrange this business."

On the morrow Lucette and her husband mounted the coach that took three days and nights to reach the Rue du Boulio. In spite of the sadness that reigned throughout the capital, Madame d'Orville found much to admire, since it was her first visit to the great city.

The busy throng on the boulevards, the Palais Royal with its shops of all kinds, and the great promenade through the park of the Tuileries, where were to be seen the astounding toilettes of the "divinities" of that day.

Besides, she did not lose hope of meeting their protectress, and when she saw a beautiful woman of noble appearance she turned a questioning glance to her husband, and d'Orville answered by a negative glance.

She had done this for the twentieth time, when he said: "You must remember, Lucette, that it is useless to ask me this. Mdlle. Gotte must have been a friend of the Queen and a fervent royalist, and I hope sincerely that she is now far from Paris For my own part I do not feel at ease here. It is true I see displayed at all the corners of the streets, 'Liberty and Fraternity,' but in spite of that it seems to me that I am surrounded by a pack of ravening wolves. Happily, I have finished my business with the notary, and if you are ready we will leave to-morrow for Dauphine.

"To-day, since there is nothing better to do, I will take you to dine at Meots, the famous restaurant of the Rue Saint-Honore. Let us hurry or we may meet the dreary procession that is to pass about four o'clock on the way to the guillotine, and I am anxious, if possible, to spare you the dismal sight."

But already both sides of the street were so crowded that they made their way with much difficulty. Never

mad such a crowd massed itself in and about the Rue Saint-Honore.

They arrived at last at Meots restaurant, where every window and doorway was packed with a crowd of curious sightseers.

Ragged and hideous wretches elbowed deputies of the Convention and presidents of the Jacobin Clubs, members of the Revolutionary Committee, and, in fact, representatives of all Paris were there.

But even as they reached the spot the jolting of the approaching cart could distinctly be heard, and presently the gendarmes who proceeded it appeared round the corner.

"Too late," sorrowfully cried the chevalier. "In spite of all, we must see this horrible sight. But above all, Lucette, do not faint, or they may take you for a 'suspect.'"

The crowd was hushed as though at last appalled at what was going on with their sanction, and only the horrible cries and oaths of the bloodthirsty hirelings of the Revolutionary Committee were to be heard.

The cart advanced slowly, and instead of the usual hecatomb of victims, one saw only a single woman seated on the bench where the condemned men were usually placed. Her black garments and white hair showed afar off underneath this pale autumn sky.

Fascinated in spite of themselves, d'Orville and his wife made their way little by little through the crowd, and the dismal vehicle came so near the two that it almost brushed against them in passing. A cry, stifled by the noise of the streets, escaped from the chevalier.

She was there before him in that loathsome cart—she, the beautiful girl of the Trianon.

With her hands clasped and resting on her knees, lost to her surroundings and insensible to further outrage, Marie Antionette seemed no longer of the earth. The long braids of golden hair, the dazzling eyes, the red lips, the lustre and beauty of these sorrows were dimmed and almost effaced. Alas, how soon the guillotine would change that too; d'Orville stifling with emotion, pressed Lucette's arm.

"Look, there she is!"

Then, turning their backs on the crowd, which moved on like a great flood towards the place of execution, he drew his companion away.

They entered the Hotel Warwick, Rue de la Loi, where they had taken lodgings; and while the Queen of France was being beheaded on the scaffold, d'Orville and Lucette invoked divine compassion for the unhappy woman who had made them so happy, and who herself had been doomed to suffer such misfortune, such fearful tortures of mind and body.

Ivy Nasatté.

BOAT RACE COMPETITION.

On Saturday, March 25th, the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race will take place. There is every reason to believe that the contest will be an exciting one, and so that our readers might take additional interest in the National event we offer a Prize of £5 to the sender of the coupon, printed below, giving most nearly correct: (1) The Winning Boat; (2) the distance separating the two boats at the finish; (3) the time taken by the winning boat in the race. The third condition will only be used to decide the actual winner of the prize in the event of more than one giving equally correct answers to the other two questions.

The Judges' decision of the race will be our standard for making the award.

Having filled up the coupon to your thinking, sign your name and address in the space provided on the left, and get two friends to sign their names and addresses on the right. In the event of your winning the prize they will each receive £1. Competitors may send in any number of attempts, all of which may be signed by the same witnesses.

Up to the present time fifty-five races have been rowed. Oxford have won thirty-two and Cambridge twenty-two races, the 1877 contest being a dead heat. Oxford have won the races for the past nine years, their times being from a minimum of 18min. 47sec. to a maximum of 22min. 15sec., and their wins during that time from half-a-length to thirteen lengths.

All envelopes containing coupons should be addressed: "Boat Race Competition," *Short Stories*, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and should reach us not later than the first post, Wednesday, March 22nd.

The Competition is run in conjunction with *PASTIMES*.

"SHORT STORIES" BOAT RACE COMPETITION COUPON.

TIME OF WINNING BOAT:

Winning Boat: .....

Min. / Sec.

Distance Won by: .....

Competitor. .....

Witnesses. .....

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SANDY CARMICHAEL
BY CUTCLIFFE AYNE

BOOK IV.—CONCERNING A SOJOURN - - AMONGST THE DAJIANS.

CHAPTER IV.

How Sneyd and O'Neill decided to annex Ebry's quarters: how they returned to the mountain camp, and learnt of Norah's abduction: and how they schemed future plans.

"Av Misther Ebry had had that cap fitted on to his ugly sconce two months ago," O'Neill remarked, "we should have been saved a hape of throuble."

The body of the unfortunate sorcerer lay on the ground before them. Attached to it was the head of the great snake cut off at the neck by a dozen haggling blows of a heavy wooden sword. They had tried to pull the two apart but the serpent's teeth had their points turned inwards, so that the reptile could not disgorge his prey of his own accord when alive, and they were unable to drag the victim away even when the powerful jaw muscles were relaxed in death. So the long fangs remained planted in the wrinkled skin of the man's neck, and the head remained hidden from view.

"It is a ghastly burying-place," Sneyd said. "But when one calls to mind some of the wretch's feats during his lifetime, there is a certain grim appropriateness about it."

"What was he doing here I wonder?" said O'Neill.

"The devil turns up at unexpected places, to quote one of Oleron's sententious remarks," replied Sneyd. "But still, I must confess it does surprise me to find this, his very worthy representative, here. The devil's I mean, not honest King Oleron's. He doesn't seem to have got into very snug quarters either. This hut is evidently the erection of a few hours, and the locality is the reverse of pleasant. He has pitched his camp near a couple of banana trees I notice; but I've rather gathered the impression that, like us, he's keeping away from the public gaze."

"It's in hidin' the old blayguard was here, beyond a doubt," replied the Irishman. "Who'd come to such an outlandish place otherwise? The hut is, as you say, just run up nohow. Wather oozes up over one's fut when yez stand on the flure, an' barrin' this calabash, which, by the smell's held something sthronger than cowld tay, there's not a thing about the place. An' av yez notice, the wee clearin's a natural one: an' what's more, it has'nt been thrampled on much. He's come to it racently. And what's more he's mostly stayed here since he came. There's no thrace of a path leadin' anywhere. There's futsteps to the banana-clump, futsteps here, futsteps there; all aisy to see in the black mud; but barrin' this one place here, where he comes in, and this other place here where we arrived, there's not a thrace of any one goin' either in or out. So when I said that Misther Ebry was just kapin' out of the way, it's the truth I was tellin', an' no lie about it."

"Well," said Sneyd, "if Ebry pitched on the place for that purpose, we may be sure it isn't likely to be disturbed. He was a great rascal, beyond doubt; but he was an undeniably clever rascal. Don't you think we had better shift down here?"

The Irishman looked dubious. "I don't think it's over safe," he remarked at last. "This low swampy place 'ud be full of fevers an' agues, and calentures. An' us wid a woman too! D'ye know I'm thinkin' that the mountain's the safer place for us, by no small deal."

"But," said Sneyd, somewhat impatiently; "we don't want a permanent residence on this cursed island. If we did, I agree with you that the higher ground would be the more healthy. But our great object is to slip away as soon as ever we get the chance. Our present camp is too far from the coast. We could never hope to march down from there, find a canoe, and get clear away to sea, without being discovered. We must feel our way forward gradually, and I don't think we could better this for a first stage. It is perfectly hidden, and we aren't known to be in this neighbourhood at all. And besides, there is abundance of both food and water—of a sort—and these are great desiderata. However strong a fort we may pitch upon, it would be useless to us if we had to capitulate to starvation."

"You're right," said the Irishman with a sigh; "an' it's meself that ought to have seen that same at once. But I'm in such a constant worry and fidget about that poor wee Norah, that I've got a head on me that for brains would do discredit to a stone statue. Let's get back and bring her down at once."

The return journey was hard enough, but it was child's play to the struggle they had experienced before. Chance led them through a part of the forest where the undergrowth was less rankly luxurious, and where a passage might be pressed through, with not much more than ordinary effort. But even here the exertion was sufficiently great to make a periodical rest imperative. However, they got into the open country at last, and being unburdened, save for a small bunch of bananas apiece—just sufficient to give Norah one meal—they moved along pretty rapidly, in spite of their exhaustion and fatigue. It was still daylight, and they wanted to reach their old camp before the sun went down.

"It won't do to have the darkness falling upon us," Sneyd had said. "It will be as black as ink for the first few

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hours, and we should be certain to miss the way. If, however, we get there before the sun sets, you and I can snatch a bit of rest, and then the three of us can be off again when the moon rises."

"Which should be just about midnight," O'Neill added.

And so they trudged along.

Their temporary home was snugly hidden. It would not come into view till they were close beside it. But there was a point just beside it which commanded a full mile of the path they had come along, and on this Norah had said she would await their return. As soon as this ridge came in sight, they turned their eyes upon it. But there was no Norah in sight. The Irishman's anxiety returned to him in an instant, and he gave vent to it in words. Sneyd too was conscious of an unaccountable sinking of heart, but he stifled its gloomy forebodings and answered cheerfully enough.

"We've been far longer than we intended, you must remember," he said. "Poor girl, she got tired of waiting for us, and went inside to lie down."

"Av she thought we were beyond our time, she'd naturally begin to think we'd got into some difficulty. An' av that same got into her pretty head, it's not lyin' down she'd be afther. Faith, man, that'd be the very rayson to kape her on the look-out. Bad scran to't, I'm afraid there's something wrong."

Fagged though they were, their pace had unconsciously increased, and they were dragging their weary limbs over the rough ground at a heavy trot.

They came up to the ridge and hailed. There was no reply. They went on towards the rude stone hut. Their worst fears were realised. With useless malignity it had been torn down, and the very stones were scattered far and wide —and of Norah, not a trace was to be seen.

O'Neill threw himself on the ground, and covered his face with his hands. Strong man though he was, he sobbed like a child. But his grief found no exit in words.

Sneyd, though deeply touched, had not received such a cruel wound. His faculties were sharpened rather than dulled by the blow, and after thoroughly and heartily anathematising poor Norah's abductors, he set about looking for any traces they might have left behind them.

There could be no two questions about the manner of the girl's departure. If she had wandered off alone, and had been unable for some reason or other to retrace her steps, the hut would have remained intact. But here it was torn down piecemeal, and scattered about in an ecstasy of savage rage. Dajian workmanship was plainly written over the ruin.

The next point was, what had happened to her? Was she still alive, as a prisoner? Had she been killed? Or, had she had warning of the intrusion in time, and managed to effect her escape? Sneyd dismissed the last of these three surmises with a sigh. He could not be sanguine enough to think it possible. There were forty incontrovertible reasons against it. He did not, however, believe that she was killed. The Dajians were cruel and merciless, and would not stick at the murder of a woman. But he thought that they would spare her life, for the present. Not through any motives of chivalry. But because a woman's corpse would be but little use to them in a woodless mountain solitude; whereas down below, at their village——but that is a matter that need be pursued no further. Suffice it to say, that Laurence Sneyd believed that Norah was still alive, but a prisoner.

Having gone through this course of induction, he tried to rouse O'Neill from his abandonment of grief, by repeating it to him stage by stage. At first the Irishman listened dully. He was too stunned by grief to let the words go thoroughly home. They fell upon his ear, but made little impression. But by degrees he shook off his preoccupation, and listened more attentively, and by the time Sneyd had finished speaking, he was more like his own shrewd self.

"I believe what yez say, that she's a prisoner in the hands of these filthy savages, poor girl," he said. "But tell me honestly now, is there a chance of her life being spared?"

"Whilst there's life there's hope, as the doctors say."

"Y'are bidding me hope, just to soften the blow. Say now, on yer honour as a gentleman, do you think she will be left alive?"

Sneyd shook his head sorrowfully. "I'm afraid not," he said.

O'Neill made reply coolly, deliberately, and without a trace of passion in his voice. "Now, hear me. I love that poor wee girl as man seldom loved woman yet. I could live widout her, I daresay, but I don't want to. You've been a good shipmate to me—the best I've ever had—but we must part here. Get you back to Erma. With luck you'll do it, an' it's me wish that you'll have every prosperity. For meself, I'll stay here. Directly those brutes kill—murther her, then there's war between me an' them, till they manage to get hold o' me."

"There's one part of your programme which won't be carried out."

"Which?" asked the Irishman, with lowering brow. "D'ye think I'm goin' to let them get hold o' me, before I've revenged her bitterly?"

"Don't lose your temper. I wasn't thinking of that. I was merely going to say, that your cool suggestion for my desertion wasn't going to be carried out, because I simply and flatly refuse to go. Man! do you think I'm such a cur as to go away, after what that girl has done? Didn't she save me at the temple with you? Should I be here now, if it wasn't for her? If they murder her, I will help you deal out a fitting punishment; and when that has been done, then we may talk of separating, if you wish it. But till then, I again emphatically refuse to leave."

O'Neill held out a hard, brown, open hand. "Put it there," he said simply; and the two men exchanged one of those hand-grips which speak a week's talk in a minute.

There was silence for a while, and then Sneyd broke it.

"It is no use to begin the matter wildly. They are many, we are only two. We must have method in our action. We must begin by finding out to which part of the island Norah has been taken. The ground here is hard, and will leave no tracks. Besides, bare feet do not make scratches on stone like hob-nailed boots might. Now unless they have come directly over the summit, the men that raided this camp to-day must have come up from the valleys on this side. Two of these, we have found, are unclimbable. The third we have ourselves just come out of, and therefore it may be set aside. The fourth, that which holds the little plateau above the waterfall, which we defended so mercilessly before, is the likeliest. They have climbed up into it—and the very fact of their doing such a thing, shows them to have pluck, which must not be despised—have climbed on, and knowing the country have guessed the way we took, and followed it successfully. We were fools to have overlooked the fact that they might take such a course; but it is too late to waste regrets over that now.

"Well, we must go down to that little plateau, and on down the fall, into the valley. There we must look about us. There should be tracks both on the plateau and below too, if they have gone that way. If there are signs which tell us such is the case, we must feel our way on and find more; and if there aren't, well, we shall have learnt that they have gone in another direction, and must set ourselves to find out which it is.

"And now, to sleep. There won't be any moon till midnight, and we can't find our way till then. So up till that time, let us get all the rest we can. Try and not let your thoughts keep you awake. Remember every tittle of strength and endurance is of value now."

Sneyd's cool dispassioned reasoning had calmed the Irishman's fierce passion down, as he had intended it should.

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His violent grief no longer bubbled over with hysterical violence. His resolve was unchanged, but he saw that cool calculation was necessary, if it was to be carried out, and so compelled himself, by sheer force of will, to do as prudence dictated. He had honestly wished his companion to leave him to his fate. But when the ex-cornet so stoutly refused to go, O'Neill felt that after all, black though they seemed, affairs might even yet change for the better. Presumably Norah was not dead yet. She was being kept alive for a purpose that made him shudder, even to think about. But still she was alive; and there was comfort in that old doctors' truism: There was hope whilst life remained.

CHAPTER V.

How Sneyd and O'Neill followed up Norah and her captors little by little: how they arrived in the nick of time at a certain hut: how the Dajians tried to roast them out: and how they walked through the flames unscathed.

The two white men were peering from behind a great boulder that had fallen from the heights above, and had lodged in the nip of a tiny gorge. At their backs were the grim rocks, black with shadow. Below them was the little plateau, when they had gathered sea-fowls' eggs. Its feathered residents were having a bad time now. The materials of their nests were blazing from a dozen great watch-fires, and most of their eggs, and many of themselves, had gone to fill a hundred hungry stomachs. Some of the savages were grouped round the fires sleeping, the rest were doing diligent sentry-duty. The locality had its fateful remembrances green in their minds, and they had no wish to be surprised and entrapped.

The two watchers had taken in every item of the situation. From far away up on the mountain side, they had seen the yellow tongues of flames shooting up from the fires, and drawing nearer, they had been able to distinguish the dark bodies beside them. Then summer lightning had begun to blaze in the sky; and fearful lest they should be seen during one of the flashes, and so put the savages on the alert and let them know of the pursuit, they came to a standstill behind the great boulder till the electric fireworks should have burned themselves out.

The girl was naturally the first object for their scrutiny. They had not far to look for her. She was in full view. She was seated on the ground, with her back up against a wall of rock. A scanty robe of *tappa* was wrapped tightly round her, and held in position under her folded arms. The distance was too great to see whether her eyes were open, but by the erectness of her head, the two men could see that Norah was fully awake. They saw, too, that she was unbound; her captors knew it was quite impossible she should escape them.

The two men noted all these points from their eyrie on the mountain side. Had the woman not been there, they could have poured down an avalanche of rock, which could have swept the plateau clear of its human inhabitants; and, but for that one circumstance, I may say that they would have done it without the smallest compunction. Indeed, they even examined the holding of the boulder which sheltered them, and finding out that it could be easily dislodged, discussed gravely the advisability of letting its potential energy loose on a sure errand of death and destruction.

"Yez see," O'Neill remarked, "it 'ud go down in two leps, an' then roll across the flat an' crush the life out of maybe half of 'em. An' 'twouldn't touch the poor wee girl because she's under the lee o' that shoulder wid the white patch on it. But, yez see, some o' the blayguard haythens would still be left wid sound skins, an' guessin' where the stone came from, the first thing they'd do would be to cut Norah's pretty throat; so that whatever happened to them, we shouldn't get her alive. Still I would rather see her lying dead, than know those fiends were torturing her down at their village, and we powerless to lift a hand to interfere. Man, dear, it's terrible to have to decide on such a point as this."

There was a minute's silence, which Sneyd broke. "If they were in any degree a civilised people down there, we might deal with them. We could loosen this huge boulder from its hold, and when day comes in, hail them to the effect that, if they did not deliver Norah up safe and sound, we would crush the life from every one of them, just as we did to their fellows. But these savages cannot believe in any treaty such as that in their warfare. It is clean beyond their experience. They would think that if once the woman was out of their grasp, we should proceed to take our vengeance all the same. They would do it themselves in a similar case, and they judge us by their own standard. And besides, even in the event of our being able to persuade them to let her go, what would be the result? As soon as we moved away, they would follow in spite of any promises they might have made to the contrary; and once they met us on equal ground, where we had no natural advantage such as we have here, there could be no possible doubt as to the final result. We might knock a few of them on the head as they came up, but we should be bound to go under sooner or later. We are both tough handfuls, but two men, however strong they may be, can't hope to beat a hundred. So I think, old comrade, the only wise course is to sit still for the present and gnaw our thumbs, and wait for what the future may bring forth. 'Every black cloud,' so Oleron used to say, 'has its milky lining,' and we must hope that ours is no exception to the rule. The outside has appeared black and lowering enough as it drove over us. The edge must show soon now. Let us hope the tint will alter before it has all blown past."

There was nothing for it but to wait.

Careful to husband their strength, and knowing the value of sleep, they did not both stay awake. They took it in turns to watch the savages' movements; and whilst one watched, the other, with sailor's aptitude, made the most of his short period of rest. Thus each had had a couple of refreshing naps when O'Neill woke his companion with the news that the savages had broken their fast, and had commenced the descent of the waterfall. Sneyd looked out, and was just in time to see Norah lowered over the brink, lashed to a pole.

The sight made her unfortunate lover groan and clench his hands in agony; but Sneyd noticed that she was treated with reasonable care, and would probably be suffering nothing except slight discomfort from the lashings. He called his companion's attention to this. But O'Neill was almost beside himself with fury at the indignities his sweetheart had to suffer, and would not listen to dispassionate reason. Excitable at all times, the trial that was thrust upon him now was almost more than he was equal to, and Sneyd was harassed by the gloomy thought, that if Norah was killed, his companion's brain would go under with the shock. And the company of a desperate madman, in such a predicament as his, would be the reverse of safe or pleasant. However, this feeling was but a passing one. He had a sincere regard for the Irishman, and loyalty to him outweighed any petty motives of personal safety. Besides, setting aside her relationship to his friend, he himself owed a debt of gratitude to Norah, which he was not likely to forget, or shirk repayment of if such were possible.

So he calmed O'Neill down as well as he could, and put it to him strongly that their only chance of saving the girl's life was to set about the task coolly and dispassionately.

They had gone down to the plateau as soon as the last of its previous occupants had quitted it; and crouched at their former vantage-post, the shielding rock beside the brink, they looked over at the descending line beneath them. The first few of the climbers had already reached the stone-strewn ground, and were pointing to the effects of the bombardment with unmistakable gesture. One by one th

others joined them. Norah, who was being lowered with tolerable care from ledge to ledge, came in her turn. Directly she reached the ground her lashings were cut off, and she was freed from the pole. As a proof that the bonds had not galled her, she was able to stand up and walk on at once; and as a sign that that there was no fear of her escaping, she was subjected to no further restraint.

The escort of Dajians marched their prisoner down the valley, past the old temple, and away through the woods. Till they reached the belt of trees they were in full view of the plateau; but directly they got into the cover, the high foliage closed over their heads. The two Europeans could restrain their patience no longer. That other Dajians might come out into the bare valley and espy them, little recked they. Their feet itched to be in pursuit. With strong nervous arms and monkeyish dexterity, they lowered themselves down the giant steps of the waterfall; and gaining the rough rock-strewn floor below, set off along it without a moment's delay.

They did not run, as they knew a long distance was before them, and one cannot run far over broken ground without either slackening speed, or becoming exhausted; but they kept up a good five-miles-an-hour walk, striding over stones, crashing through scrub, splashing through water-courses, and halting for nothing. They reached the timber and entered it. There was no doubt about the route. A hundred pairs of feet cannot pass over soft ground without leaving a trail which he who runs may read.

They pushed on through the cool tree-aisles without hesitation, but at the same time they kept a smart look-out ahead. It would not have done to walk plump into a settlement. The danger of such a proceeding to themselves they did not think of. Their own safety was a thing they had ceased to remember as a personal item, but as their lives were now for Norah's service, they must be cared for till the time came to place them at her disposal either for escape or vengeance. So they advanced circumspectly, but for a couple of miles they found no cause for alarm.

Then they came upon half-a-dozen squalid huts dotted round a clearing in the forest, and dropped back into cover to reconnoitre. A careful inspection showed that the place was occupied by a few women, a score or so of children, and, say, half-a-dozen old men. The younger men were evidently elsewhere employed.

"The whole crowd of them couldn't stop us if we wanted to march through," Sneyd whispered; "but we mustn't be idiotic enough to attempt that. It is clear that the men who have got Norah went through the village, and continued down some path at the other side. We must make a circuit through the woods till we come on their tracks again, and then must strike out a line of our own, parallel to it."

"But why not kape to the path when we're once round the village?" O'Neill objected. "It's terrible slow work squirming through the lianes and rattans that tie this timber together."

"Because if we kept the path, we might meet natives coming towards the village. That would mean a row, and if any of them got away they would go and rouse the neighbourhood, and bring a host of their friends down about our ears in half no time."

"True for yez," the Irishman replied. "Sthupid of me not to think of it. Come along now. Don't let's be afther waitin' any longer."

On they went again, keeping an eye on the rude path, and occasionally walking along it when the jungle proved impassable. But for the most part they held on a parallel line of their own, and twice avoided parties of natives by doing so. Judging from their weapons and travel-stained appearance, these men had evidently formed part of the expedition, and it was easy to deduce from this that the main body had broken up and most had departed to their own settlements. The prisoner would have but a slender escort.

"So much the better for us," said Sneyd, speaking of this. "The only thing now left is to find where they have gaoled her. But I'm afraid that will prove a harder nut to crack than any we have had so far."

Fortune, however, favoured them. Coming to a point where several paths met, they found that here the division had taken place. The majority of the men seemed to have gone down towards the coast, at least the grass was most trodden in that direction; but five had turned up a narrow alley amongst the trees, and in doing so had crossed a little stream. Their footprints visible on the black mud of both banks told of this, and O'Neill, who had been stooping down to examine them, raised himself erect again with a joyful exclamation.

"Begob!" he cried, "I'd swear to it among five thousand. See it there between these two floundering hoof-marks! The natest little fut in all the Pacific!"

"Norah's?" asked Sneyd, coming to him.

"Av coorse. Who's else's could it be? Look for yerself, dacent man. Foive wee toes, a pretty rounded heel, a small space where the high instep arched over the mud; an' the whole is covered wid the palm of me hand. Look! Don't tell me there's another dainty fut like that on Daji, barrin' the match to this. An' see here that is. There! av yez want further proof, there 'tis. Poor darlint, she cut her right heel on these infernal mountain stones, as yez will remember, an' ye see it made her limp a bit. Look how gingerly she's gone. All the weight on her toes, an' the heel scarcely markin' the ground. Come along wid yez. Don't let's be waitin' any longer."

If Sneyd was but half convinced, the Irishman was wholly satisfied, and strode along the path which he felt would bring him to his sweetheart's side, as fast as his sturdy legs would carry him. His brawny hand gripped the shaft of his rude stone-headed mace till the muscles of his arm stood out like ropes, and his whole body tingled with excitement. The Englishman followed closely upon his companion's heels as a matter of course, half dreading lest the other's precipitancy should lead them into an ugly mess.

But O'Neill would listen to no suggestion for caution. "The poor darlint's on ahead, an' she's wantin' help. I feel she's wantin' it—now—this minute." Such was his only reply, and having delivered himself of it, he pressed forward with even greater pace. So there was no help for it but to go on.

Every now and again footmarks on a piece of soft ground showed them that they were still on the right track. The path wound in and out, making a five yards' circuit for every yard's advance, and so their view was a narrow one. For the jungle around and above was one thick matted block, and the path bored amidst the foliage like a tunnel through rock.

Of a sudden the thick forest ended. There were a few scattered trees beyond the abrupt edge of the wood, but these were small, and did not obstruct the view.

The two Europeans made a momentary stop. Before them was a tiny bush and grass-floored valley, surrounded by high precipitous walls of rock—a gloomy place that saw but a very few hours' sunshine in the day. In the middle of it was a small bamboo hut.

As the two men stood there, a woman's scream rose in the still air, which electrified them into motion again. They tore across the intervening space as hard as their legs would carry them. O'Neill was first. He dashed in through the doorless portal of the hut. Norah was there, struggling with two savages. She welcomed him with a cry of delight, and her persecutors let her go to clutch hold of their weapons. Sneyd sent one to earth with a skull crunched like an egg-shell. The other bolted out of the door; and, winged by fear, made for the forest path like a scared wolf.

All had happened in a few seconds—as quickly as you read it.

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Seeing that there was no chance of overtaking the fugitive, Sneyd turned to the girl. "Norah," he said, "weren't there four of these beauties with you?"

"Yes," she replied. "The others are behind the hut, I think. I heard them there just before you came up."

Sneyd darted out again, O'Neill after him. They were just in time to see two forms rush down the path through the forest, and disappear. It was useless to pursue them.

"Now," said Sneyd, "we haven't a moment to lose. Those beggars will rouse half the island in twenty minutes' time, so we must take to the hills again without delay, and work our way across to Ebry's camp. We are none of us over fresh, and must take the journey in two stages, if not three. But start at once we must; so, Norah, my dear, I hope you feel equal to it. We will help you all we can."

They went out and scrutinised the rocky wall. Their faces grew longer as they did so.

"The place is like the side of a house," Sneyd murmured in English.

"An' not bein' flies, I don't see how we are to climb it," replied O'Neill. "That's the only possible place just opposite you now, but I don't see how we are to get more than thirty yards up."

"It may improve as it goes on," said Sneyd. "Anyway we must try it. Here, give me a leg up, and then hand Norah on."

By dint of hard climbing they gained those thirty yards, and then found, beyond all manner of doubt, that they could not get an inch farther. The rock above was sheer, without fissure or cranny in it. There wasn't a vestige of foothold anywhere.

"We won't stay here for them to make a cock-shy of us," cried O'Neill. "We must try an' get down the path to somewhere."

They reached the ground again, and were making across the open to the edge of the forest, when a couple of savages emerged from the covering trees and stopped confidently.

"Cornered at last," exclaimed the Irishman. "Well, they haven't killed us yet, an' by the powers there'll be a good number o' them makin' their wives into widows before they do manage it. Into the hut wid us. There's just two doorways, an' wid luck we ought to make 'em pay dearly for their bargain. Here we are. In wid yez. Norah, darling, good-bye. I've done me best, and so's Sneyd. There, go an' kiss him, an' then come and kiss me. Here's a bamboo knife that once belonged to that ould blayguard, Ebry, who was at the bottom of all the mischief. You know what to do wid it when we get bowled over?"

Norah nodded her shapely head.

"They will not get me alive this time," she said simply; and then they took leave of one another, and waited for the end.

* * * * *

But the expected end did not come. There was no fierce onset heralded by barbaric yells. There was no grim hand-to-hand fighting, of one man framed in a doorway against as many as could crowd near enough to aim a blow at him.

The savages poured out of the path through the forest in dozens and dozens, but they massed themselves in a sullenly murmuring mob just outside the wood, and showed no signs of advancing to the attack.

A hint had been passed round that these white men who showed such wonderful powers, who had perpetrated such great slaughter, were more than mortal—were gods, in fact With all kinds of superstition rampant amongst them, it did not take long before this shadowy hint was metamorphosed into a solid belief, and their was not a man amongst the whole crowd who would have dared lift a weapon against such awful beings. But still the hate for them was undiminished. "They might be gods," argued these curious logicians, "but assuredly they must be gods of evil, harm-working deities, and as such, should be destroyed."

I believe in all other mythologies a God is *ipso facto*, immortal; but in that of Daji it appears that gods whose influence is malign, are capable of being destroyed, either by fire or water. Water was out of the question here, or they would doubtless gladly have tried it; but the dry parched grass, and the withered shrubs of the valley's floor offered a capital medium for the other alternative The moist woods would not suffer. Scarcely their outlying branches would be singed. But the tinder dry herbage round the hut would blaze with summary fierceness. Small fear of the white men and their *protégée* escaping that ordeal.

So the accustomed labour of rubbing fire from wood was gone through, and the funeral pyre was lighted. The flames spread like oil on water, licked up the dry grass, and roared in awful fury.

The trade-wind was blowing gently up from the sea, and the tawny torrent of fire rolled on before it, polluting the clear burning blue above with clouds of inky smoke, and leaving the ground behind black and bare. It reached the hut, sprang at it with a venomous bound, and wrapped it in crackling flames in a moment of time. The dry bamboos exploded and bent; the roof fell in; and the yellow surge swept on, leaving a few flaming stumps to mark its work.

The flames stretched in one continuous line across the valley now, and licked the grim stone barriers on either side.

"We are rid of our enemies," exclaimed a chief in tone of exultation. "If they were not destroyed in the hut, they must be pinned against the rock further on. They cannot escape now. The cliffs are unscalable."

But scarcely had the words passed his lips than a dark spot was seen in the yellow wall of flame, which widened and increased till it resolved itself into a man, who stepped out from the furnace, and stood apparently unharmed on the blackened ground beyond.

He was the black-haired white man.

Behind him came the Erman girl and him with hair like the sunset, both of them uninjured by the fierce ordeal they had come through.

The three were bearing branches in their hands, which they threw to the ground when they emerged to the open; and then, without looking back, they advanced straight towards the savages.

One yell of terror made the welkin ring, and then those cannibal Dajians fled. The men they had tried to harm were gods indeed. With no other charm than a simple fan of *tii* bush they had bidden the flames avaunt, and had emerged from the fiery embrace unscathed, unsinged. The only hope for the island now was that they would betake themselves across the sea to Erma, whence they came, without taking further revenge for the insults which had been showered upon them.

And so Norah and her two companions got a canoe, victualled it, and put to sea without further molestation.

(To be continued.)

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How the Captain's Heart was Reached.

At nine o'clock sharp, Captain Chéreau left his club and went home to bed.

Every night, after undressing methodically, he would hang his dolman over the back of a chair, lay his trousers lengthwise on the sofa, folding them carefully in the creases, and wind his watch, and drink a glass of water. Then one good blow of the fist—just one—upon the feather pillow, and he would crawl into bed and extinguish the candle. This was his invariable method of procedure, performed almost mechanically for twenty years past.

The Captain closed his eyes and thought about the events of the day. He had lost at dominoes and had had to pay for coffee for two, and that had annoyed him a little. Then he sighed, turned over, and fell quickly asleep.

Just how long he had been sleeping he could not tell, but for some reason he awoke. He lay still for a moment trying to find a reason for the unusual occurrence.

Everything was as he had left it when he retired. It was not raining outside, so he determined that it was mere restlessness, and soon fell into a doze.

Suddenly there was a queer noise in the next room—a baby was crying. As if bothered by an oppressive dream, the sleeping Captain tossed about restlessly, muttering under his breath something that sounded like: "Horrid little imp!"

But the screaming of the child became worse and more penetrating as the time wore on, until the room seemed fairly filled with it. Then the Captain found himself wide-awake, and he gave vent to his feelings in a single strong word. For a year he had not had a whole night's rest!

His neighbours were a young couple, a mere Lieutenant and his wife. Since the arrival of a baby next door the crabbed old bachelor had had to suffer its moaning, then its crying, and now it was old enough to shriek lustily.

Instead of mending, matters had, indeed, become still worse, since the baby's father, this "mere Lieutenant," with his sharp voice and his stupid baby-talk, had tried to take a hand in the quieting of the child. His "Where's baby's hair?" and "Does baby love papa?" which he would repeat ten or twenty times, until the little tot would point to its head or stroke its papa's cheeks!—oh, how trying it was!

But never before had the crying of the child been so piercing as it was this night. It was a succession of screams of fright; the shrieks of a child left alone at night, crying until the little throat was raw, until it lacked breath to utter another sound. Alarmed and angry at the same time, the Captain jumped out of bed exclaiming:

"Well, well, what's the matter now?"

Ordinarily, the sharp voice of the Lieutenant or a lullaby from the mother soothed the troubles of the little one. This time, however, the tears remained undried. The old bachelor quickly put on his uniform and went into the hall.

The door of the adjoining apartment had by some accident been left ajar; a lamp was burning brightly on the table in the anteroom. He took it and entered the sleeping-room.

By the side of the large bed stood a cradle. There lay the little one in a jumble of cushions, beating the air with her hands and feet. Her face had become a dark red from the exertion of yelling and kicking.

Quickly the Captain looked through the apartment, stepping into the dining-room, the elegantly furnished parlour, the girl's room, the kitchen. Not a soul was there! Even the nurse-girl was nowhere about.

"Bother it!" he exclaimed. "So, while the Lieutenant and his wife spend the evening at an entertainment, the nurse-girl runs out to meet her sweetheart! Humph!"

Quickly he returned to the cradle, and lifted up the little baby, a tiny girl. But she struggled so hard with her legs, and made such violent movements with her little body, that the Captain was afraid he might drop her.

He sat on a chair and placed her upon his knees. But she still kept on crying. To quiet her the Captain got up, held her before him with outstretched arms, and began to dance some step which he invented on the spur of the moment. It resembled the trot of a horse more than any known dance.

To complete the effect he sang, keeping time with his fancy step: "Houpla, houpla! tolderolloll!" over and over again.

His efforts to quiet the baby were almost crowned with success; she sobbed a little less, the tears became scarcer and scarcer—the last drops from an empty vessel!

Suddenly she lay quite still; her eyes, her expression, her outstretched arms plainly conveyed a desire for something. The Captain turned his eyes in the direction of the object coveted by the little girl; she wanted his cross—his V.C.

For the moment, the coloured ribbon and trinket seemed to her, as to many other babies, the most desirable object in the world. The old bachelor allowed the awkward little fingers which were so slim and straight, to take his cross. The little one at once quieted down and began to smile sweetly at him.

Captain Chéreau felt proud—proud as a hero after a hard fought battle, crowned with victory. Never had the smile of a woman been so welcome to him; never had he been so happy, so joyful as at that moment! He walked about, and now he better succeeded in holding the little girl in her long night-gown.

The rough old Captain looked down upon her with the eyes of the explorer who discovers a new country. The little round cheeks, with the dried tears still visible upon them; the little, half-opened mouth, made him feel curiously soft-hearted. With exuberant enthusiasm he drew up the little head to his own bearded face.

"Do you love me?"

But the coloured ribbon of the cross was a far greater attraction for baby than the Captain's big moustache. Then he hit upon the idea of disguising his voice and imitating the Lieutenant, and asked coaxingly:

"Does baby love papa?"

He had to repeat this question at least twenty times. If there had been on the other side of the wall a certain Captain about forty-five years of age, how angry he would have been to have heard that!

But this very Captain just then permitted a rather young lady to kiss him, and the oddest thing about it was that the two fresh, moist lips that touched his cheeks made his eyes grow dim with tears and refreshed his kind and loving old heart.

A clock struck midnight. Nobody came home, neither the nurse nor the young couple. The little one was

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tired enough to drop, but Captain Chéreau was a novice in the art of putting babies to sleep. He remembered, however, that the baby's mother had always hummed a melody. That he might try also. But alas! he only knew military marches. Well, he would try a march on the baby.

Pacing up and down the room with long steps, he rocked the little girl—who had long ago succeeded in loosening the ribbon from his coat, and was now busy trying to bite the cross—and softly hummed a soldier's song.

But the sweet little burden upon his arm did not care to go to sleep just then; she mumbled inarticulate sounds, laughed and looked at him with her big, blue eyes. Then Captain Chéreau thought that the rhythm of his song must have been too lively; he started another, a very slow, monotonous tune, all about "the boy that went away and would come back on the morrow."

He sang so well and developed such zeal that the little girl actually went to sleep. The Captain was so afraid that she might wake up if he tried to put her back into her little nest of lace and feathers, that he sat down carefully in an armchair and remained there without stirring.

The room had become still again; only the clock on the wall ticked with every swing of the pendulum. The Captain looked intently at the child; sleep seemed to have overcome her in the midst of some motion; one of her dimpled fists lay on his breast, the other still clasped the cross.

Peace rested upon the pure, closed eyelids, upon the curls over that moist forehead, upon the tender cheeks, upon the half opened lips, from which a deep breath issued at regular intervals.

The warmth of that little body permeated his, and rose in him as a wave of intoxication. Does that joy really exist, then, he asked himself, which fills all those who are near to a child? And that warm tenderness issuing from a child's heart is not an empty delusion, either.

Oh! what a difference between the empty superficial life he led, and the ever-anxious, solicitous love inspired by such a sweet little creature, whom one could love from first to last, from birth to death!

The noise of the clock suddenly seemed to fill the room, and Captain Chéreau felt that he was an old man; he felt it plainly, just as one notices the hair getting white.

"How short is life after all!" he sighed. And he regretted his lost years, his wasted years, his selfish life of which there would remain nothing, nothing at all. There would be no one to mourn him even.

A wave of emotion came over him, and went from his heart to his eyes.

There were steps in the anteroom; the young couple had come home at last, she wrapped in furs, he with the collar of his coat turned up. On the threshold of the room they halted, thunderstruck; near the table in the big armchair sat their fellow lodger, the Captain, holding in his arms their child, fast asleep, and still holding the Captain's cross in her tightly closed fist.

They were about to cry out at the unusual scene:

"Oh, Captain——!"

But Captain Chéreau lifted his head, and, showing his face flooded with tears, he whispered softly to them, placing his forefinger upon his grizzled moustache:

"Hush! She's asleep."

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Further particulars respecting this Competition, which closes on Monday, April 17th, will be found on page 337.

S. S.

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

XIV.—A FISHING EXCURSION.

"I SAY, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, with a sort of grin, "how would you like to go fishing?"

"Wouldn't that be perfectly lovely!" said Mrs. Timmins. "I never went fishing in my life, and I always wanted to try it. Where can we go?"

"Well, there are lots of places not too far off. Last summer I saw boys catch a good many fish off the Tilbury Docks We might go there."

"Just the place," conceded Mrs. Timmins. "Perhaps we can catch some sardines," and in her glee Mrs. Timmins waltzed across the room and back again. Mr. Timmins smiled pleasantly upon his wife, and started out into the yard to get some worms, while Mrs. Timmins dressed herself for the pending excursion.

"Have you got any fishing sticks?" she asked, as Mr. Timmins returned, rather warm from his exercise.

"I've got some fishing rods, if that is what you mean," replied Mr. Timmins, "but I could only find four worms."

"Can't we break them in two?" inquired Mrs. Timmins, anxiously.

"I dessay," grunted Mr. Timmins. "Come along, if you are coming," and, thoroughly equipped for the expedition, Mr. and Mrs. Timmins set out.

* * * * *

"How long before they bite?" asked Mrs. Timmins, hoisting her hook out of the water and examining the point of a worm her husband had impaled thereon,

"They'll probably bite at that as soon as they can borrow a step ladder," retorted Mr. Timmins, eyeing the dangling hook. "If you want to get any fish you had better let that thing down in the water."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Timmins, dropping the hook. "Do you think I could catch a goldfish?" she inquired, after a pause.

"Hi! hold on. There, I've lost him!" burst in Mr. Timmins, firing his hook up towards the sky.

"So did I!" chimed Mrs. Timmins, as she fell over backward, and shot her float into Mr. Timmins' straw hat. "I declare we both lost him."

"What are you doing?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "What did you lose? When I'm pulling in a fish you just sit still, will you? Do you take my head for a fish-pond? Drop it, I tell you! Drop it into the water. There! Now sit still and fish. Another time I'm pulling in a mackerel, you let things alone. You made me lose that fish."

"You ought to have caught him," said Mrs. Timmins soothingly, "you fished splendidly for him."

"I understand the business," rejoined Mr. Timmins, somewhat mollified. "You see he didn't even get the bait, big as he was."

"I'm glad of that, because we've only got three worms left. How I'd like to catch an oyster. Do you know I——"

"Hush! Sh-h-h-h-h-h! Quiet now! Now I'll fetch him!" and Mr. Timmins reeled in until he landed an old boot.

"I didn't know that fish looked like that when they first came out of the water," said Mrs. Timmins, quivering with excitement. "Crack him and let me see what he is."

"Crack your grandmother!" snorted Mr. Timmins, shying the boot away. "He wasn't good to eat. I'll get something——"

"What's the matter with my stick? Let go, you nasty thing. Here's another one. Quick!"

"Pull him out, can't you? You've got a bite. Haul him up!" cried Mr. Timmins, trying to untangle himself from his line and help his wife. "Lift him out of the water."

"He won't let me!" squeaked Mrs. Timmins, holding both arms out at full length. "Take him off! Go away, you monster!"

"Lift your rod straight up in the air!" shouted Mr. Timmins. "Hoist the thing up!"

Mrs. Timmins exerted herself, and disclosed an eel dangling.

"It's an adder!" she yelled. "Don't go near him! Fire, fire! Murder, murder! Police, police-e-e!"

"Hold on hard, will you?" shouted Mr. Timmins. "Get him over so that I can catch him. What are you holding him out there for? Waiting for him to dry? Stick that rod straight up in the air, I tell you!"

Mrs. Timmins threw the rod over her shoulder and flopped the eel into Mr. Timmins' countenance.

"Hang the thing!" he shrieked. "Stop waving that lightning-rod like a flag, will you? Hold it still, I say."

"Don't touch him! Throw him overboard! He'll sting you to death!" gurgled Mrs. Timmins, and, forgetting that the rod still exercised an influence over the eel, she gave it a jerk and slipped it through Mr. Timmins' fingers. That gentleman made a spring for it, and swashed into the water.

"Heu! blab! beu! waggle! glu! hic! gah! gaggle!" spluttered Mr. Timmins, as some lighterman fished him out.

"Did you catch cold, dear?" inquired Mrs. Timmins, with solicitude, as they made their way home.

"If I did, I landed it!" growled Mr. Timmins, blowing mud like the exhaust of a tug.

"Anyhow, I caught an eel, didn't I?" asked Mrs. Timmins, carrying out a woman's idea of comforting a man with the only thing he doesn't want to hear about.

"Oh, you caught it!" ripped out Mr. Timmins. "You're a fish-woman, you are! All you want now is glass sides and some bubbles running through you to be an aquarium. Another time we both go fishing you'll stay at home. You hear?" And, with this novel mathematical suggestion Mr. Timmins shunted himself to his domicile and took a glass of toddy to ward off the cold he felt coming on.

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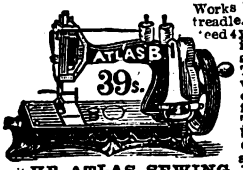

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Competitions are always interesting, and my readers should enter the "£1,000 Prize" and the "Boat-Race Competition," full particulars of which will be found in this issue of *Short Stories*. Neither competition costs anything to enter, and you are bound to admit that life is worth living when you stand a very good chance of winning £1,000 or even £5. Tell your friends about it. If they win they may generously hand some of the prize money over to you. In any case, we will guarantee you a prize if they win—that is, if you act as one of the witnesses.

D. R.—A few years ago, almost all the horseradish on the English market was grown in Holland, and it was thought to be impossible to grow it here to such an extent as to compete with the Dutch. At the present time, the English variety is realising better prices than the imported root, and is driving it out of the market.

S. T.—An idea of the strength of bears has been given by a hunter in the Hudson Bay district. He watched a female bear carrying a dead heifer to the cubs at home. The animal carried her burden in her fore paws for a distance of three miles. He shot the bear, and out of curiosity, had both animals weighed. The heifer turned the scale at 200lb., the bear weighing 450lb.

P. C.—The overcrowding of trains here is bad enough, but it is far worse in the Indian jungle. On these jungle trains the cheap carriages are crammed to their utmost capacity, and it often happens that at every station scores of wretched natives are left behind to sleep and pass the time as best they can till the next train arrives—twenty-four hours later.

E. T. asks: "Which school is called 'Cromwell's School'? I am told that it is a very ancient school, and that Scott made mention of it in one of his novels of ancient England."——The Grammar School of the town of Huntingdon is the one to which you refer. It dates from the twelfth century, and was founded by David, Earl of Huntingdon, who is the Sir Kenneth of Scott's "Talisman." You are a little out in your data, you see, as regards Scott. For a very long time it was an asylum for the wayfarer and the stranger as well as a school.

Chem.—The most ancient pharmacopœia was found wrapped up with a mummy dating back to 1500 B.C. Most of the drugs in common use were employed thousands of years ago; castor oil and rhubarb, for instance, were ordinary medicines among the ancient Arabians.

S. W.—The Swiss mountains are not regarded as suitable residences by microbes. A bacteriologist who went hunting for microbes at an altitude of 2,000 feet, was unable to discover a single specimen.

Eye.—The invention of spectacles is an honour claimed for various illustrious personages, including Roger Bacon and King Charles II. Pliny says that Nero watched the gladiators fighting on frequent occasions through a concave lens of emerald, from which it is assumed that the ruler, who fiddled while Rome was burning, was short-sighted. The man who first put two convex lenses into a frame—which he did to enable artists to do small work—was Salvini degli Armati, of Florence; that was in 1285. His tomb, bearing the date 1317, has an inscription claiming him as the inventor of spectacles.

Wind.—A broken-winded horse is not so frequently seen in Norway as in this country. A bucket of water is always placed within reach of the animal when feeding, and he takes a mouthful of hay and a drink of water occasionally.

I. L.—The only statistics of illiteracy in Russia are furnished by the recruiting departments of the army and navy. Whenever a man presents himself for service he is asked whether he can read and write, and his answer is recorded. From the latest reports it appears that 40 per cent. of the recruits were illiterate. Far more females than males are unable to read, and it is rare to find an old peasant who can read and write; so it is estimated that not more than a quarter of the population of the Russian Empire have acquired the rudiments of knowledge.

Patriot.—"Rule, Britannia," was written by Thompson, author of "The Seasons." The music is by Dr. Arne. It first appeared in a masque entitled "Alfred," August 1st, 1740.

A. K.—The city of Ghent, in Belgium, is built on twenty-six islands, connected by eighty bridges. There are three hundred streets and thirty squares on these islands.

Brian.—According to a German scientist, the brain contains 300,000,000 nerve cells, 5,000,000 of which die every day. Presuming that the cells die in regular order—the oldest first—this means that we get a new brain every ten months. This seems to throw some light on the rapid change that takes place in the opinions of certain people.

B. N.—Mexico has had fifty-five Presidents since 1821, of whom no fewer than sixteen have met with violent deaths. We do not intend to include "How to Become President of Mexico" in our "Life's Work" articles in *P.W.*

Nubi.—Before the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg can pass from the British Royal Family, some calamity must carry off the Duke of Connaught, his son, and the young Duke of Albany. Supposing this to happen, the succession would fall to the King of Portugal. This would raise complications, and probably lead to the Kaiser taking possession of the Duchy.

C. E.—So far as is known, only one European Christian has become a Buddhist priest; his ordination took place a few weeks ago in Ceylon.

U. S.—Those best qualified to speak on the subject say that cats show a decided objection to taking up their abode in laundries, no matter how plentiful may be the supply of mice. This is probably due to the cat's dislike to wet and damp, while it may also be taken for granted that the not particularly pleasant odour of stewing linen offends the nose. At any rate, it has been found in many instances, that after a very short stay the cat leaves without notice.

Bike.—In some Continental cities the bicyclist is treated with more consideration than in our own large towns. In Vienna a grant of ground for a new street has been made conditional on the laying out of a strip of the road for the special use of cyclists.

Viz.—The custom of wearing the wedding ring on the third finger of the left hand originated with the Egyptians. They believed that this digit was directly connected with the heart by a slender nerve, and they held it sacred. Hence their adoption of it as the most suitable for the symbol of union.

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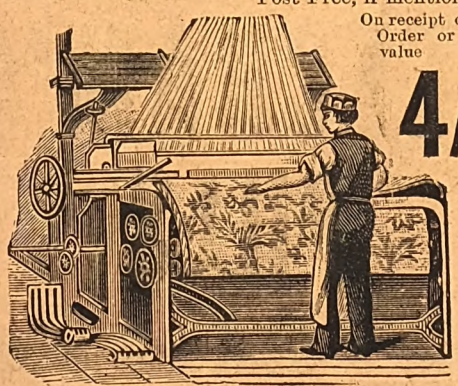

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EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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STORY STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 534. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending March 25th, 1899.

A CUBAN TRAGEDY.

ONE evening three or four years ago, when Cuba was seething with bad blood, and the insurgents were working up to the last act of the tragedy that terminated in the defeat of Spain by America, the mail steamer *Washington* was slowly passing Morro Castle, through the narrow opening which leads to the Bay of Havanna, with the hills of Guanabacoa on the one side, and the beautiful city on the other, behind which rise palm-groves and luxurious tropical gardens where stand the many-tinted villas of the suburbs Cerro, Quemados, and Marianao.

One of the first to come on board the liner from the multifarious boats that swarmed out to meet her was Nita Gonzalez, a handsome young Creole who had come to welcome her American friend, Dulcie Faulkner. They had met at a French school, and Nita had paid two or three long visits to New York, but this was Dulcie's first sight of her friend's lovely home.

When their mutually affectionate greetings had been somewhat demonstratively exchanged, Dulcie was joined by her brother Geoffry, a tall, fair man of five-and-twenty, who had been accosted by a sallow, saturnine Cuban some five years his senior.

"She's prettier than ever, isn't she, Geoff?" said Dulcie, as her brother clasped her friend's hand warmly.

"That would be impossible, for she was always perfect," replied Faulkner, with a look of undisguised admiration and a tender pressure of the hand he still held.

"You seem to have developed new accomplishments—flattery, for instance. The last time I saw you, football and teasing were more in your line," replied Nita, laughing.

"Oh, I'm getting civilised, I assure you, and trust to you to complete my education," he replied, with a meaning glance at the seductive Spanish eyes of the girl beside him.

"We must be getting off," said Nita quickly. "The carriage is waiting near the custom-house, and if you'll give your papers to our man, Juan, he will see to the luggage, and we can drive straight home. Father is so sorry he cannot be back till late to-night."

"Dulcie will be delighted to accept your hospitality, but, unfortunately, I am detained in the city on business, so I've taken rooms at the hotel near the office. However, I shall hope to see you to-morrow evening at the latest," said Geoffry.

The last part of his speech drove away the cloud that had gathered on Nita's brow at his refusal to join them, and with an eloquent look from her lustrous dark eyes, she watched him rejoin his Cuban acquaintance.

After a few minutes' conversation he came back to the two girls, and, touching his sister on the arm, said quietly:

"There goes our friend Don Philippo Juarez, the gentleman I have come to tackle. He's as smooth-tongued a villain as ever robbed a fellow-creature, I'll wager."

The girls looked in the direction he indicated, and Nita remarked nervously:

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"I hate and distrust that man. He looks capable of anything. Father could not rest till one of you had come to see into things."

Don Alfonzo Gonzalez was the acting head of a firm in Cuba of which Geoffry D. Faulkner, senior, was the financial chief, and certain grave discrepancies in the department over which Juarez presided had caused the urgent message to New York in answer to which young Faulkner had come to Cuba in person.

The next morning Don Philippo Juarez appeared at the hotel to pay his respects to the millionaire's son, and his courtly dignity contrasted oddly enough with the free and easy, sharp business manners of the New Yorker. A casual observer might well have reversed the positions of employer and employed, so lofty was the air with which the Cuban comported himself.

"How in the world do you dress in this stifling, hot-house climate of yours?" asked Geoffry, who was lounging in a rocking-chair, sipping iced drinks, and wearing only a fine silk shirt and white trousers, such as he had worn during the latter part of the voyage. "Can I go out in these things?"

"Perfectly. All you need is a light jacket. We try to combine comfort with elegance," replied the Cuban, looking down complacently at his own spick and span white suit, which accentuated his dark, forbidding face.

"Bring me my coat and kamarband, Tom!" called Faulkner to his black servant.

The boy came in from the adjoining room with a white coat and an armful of silk scarves.

"Those are a little too bright for the daylight," said the American, tossing over some red and yellow Oriental sashes, till at last, with a smile, he selected a blue and white one, saying:

"These are my football club colours. Neat and elegant. Eh?"

The Cuban had been watching him with languid indifference till he saw him take up the blue and white scarf, then a satanic smile flitted over his face, and he answered courteously:

"Nothing could be in better taste or more appropriate."

In a few seconds Faulkner's toilet was completed with coat, tie, and kamarband, and Tom followed his master down the magnificent hotel staircase to the carriage in which the Cuban had arrived. As they passed through the hall, Tom noticed several people turn to look after Mr. Faulkner, and one or two men made whispered comments to each other, but he could not hear what they said.

That evening Don Alfonzo drove with Dulcie and his daughter to El Parquecito, where they had arranged to meet Geoffry, and the two girls were waiting in the carriage under the windows of the American club while their cavalier went in search of him.

The band was playing a Spanish dance, and the gaily-dressed throng gathered out of three continents had awakened to life and pleasure after the paralysing heat of the day. It was Dulcie's first glimpse of tropical life, and she was enjoying it with all the vivacity and lively interest of her enthusiastic temperament.

Nita, on the other hand, was silent; the scene had no new charm for her since the one she was hoping to see had not made his appearance.

All at once there came over the crowd one of those sudden transitions of feeling common to hot-blooded nations and individuals alike. Above the polyglot murmur of society talk rose angry voices and threatening cries, and a stampede was made for one of the entrances.

"What's the matter?" asked Dulcie, open-eyed.

"Sancta Maria! It's an insurgent! They will tear him to pieces!" cried Nita, who understood the angry cries around them.

"Oh! lynch law, I suppose? But I thought they kept to the hills. What's he doing in this select assembly?" replied Dulcie.

At that moment she saw a man drop from the balcony of the American club and dash into the crowd, clearing his way with his muscular arms, before which the clattering, gesticulating folk dispersed like smoke.

"That's an Englishman, from the way he uses his fists," said Dulcie, getting up on the seat to have a better view of the fray, and watch the stalwart Briton's progress.

"Nita, it's just splendid to see him! He's got through, and—Oh! The brute!" she cried, stamping her foot, and putting her hand before her eyes.

Dulcie's last epithet did not apply to the Englishman, but to a tall, powerful negro, whom she saw raise a long knife and bring it down upon someone in the midst of the crowd.

In a few minutes Don Alfonzo came hurrying to the carriage in great agitation and whispered something to his daughter, which made her turn ashen grey and clutch at the rail for support.

"What has happened, Don Alfonzo? I am so excited. And can't you find Geoffry? What is all this uproar about?" asked Dulcie, in her quick, disjointed way.

"There has been a mistake—an accident. I am terribly distressed. Mr. Faulkner—has—been——" stammered Don Alfonzo.

"It wasn't Geoffry I saw—stabbed—there! Tell me at once!" cried the girl, seizing his hand.

But before Don Alfonzo could answer, the crowd parted to permit the Englishman and two friends of the Gonzalez, who were carrying the unconscious form of the young American, to pass into the Club.

Geoffry's white shirt was torn and blood-stained, and only a shred of the blue and white kamarband hung from his waist. The tie had entirely disappeared in the scuffle.

When his wound was attended to, it was found not to be so dangerous as at first feared, but it was judged unsafe to move him from the club, where Dulcie and a nursing sister from the convent of St. Salvador were ensconsed for the night in charge of the patient.

Tom was wandering restlessly about the hotel waiting for his master with a dark sense of foreboding in his mind. He could not explain it to himself, but something was going to happen, he was sure of that. About eleven o'clock he saw two of the men who had stared so hard at his master that morning come and sit down in the American bar.

"There ought to be the dickens of a row about that stabbing affair in the gardens to-night! But how could he be such a fool!" said one.

"He wouldn't know he was wearing the insurgents' colours. He only landed last night, and I don't suppose he gave it a thought," said the other.

"Possibly not, but Juarez might have given him a hint. They went out together, you know, this morning."

"Juarez may have seen in it a way out of his difficulties. Young Faulkner had come to look into things, I'm told, and Don Philippo has been robbing the firm for years. He's a cunning scoundrel."

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Tom waited to hear no more. He must go to his master, whom he loved with the dog-like fidelity of his race. He darted out into the street, threading his way through the passers-by, pausing to listen wherever he thought to gain information. By degrees he gleaned the outlines of the story—how his master had gone to El Parquecito wearing the insurgents' colours, blue and white, and had been quickly surrounded by an angry crowd of Spaniards, who were only too glad to catch an American openly fermenting sedition.

While the excited parley was going on, a huge negro had worked his way up behind young Faulkner, and had plunged a knife into his back; but the timely interference of an Englishman had turned the blow aside and thus prevented the wound from being fatal.

Tom stole into the club and looked at his master. Dulcie promised he should have his share in the nursing later on, but at present she wanted him to fetch some of her brother's things from the hotel. As soon as he had done this, Tom started off on an errand of his own, having previously armed himself with a bowie-knife.

He took up his position outside Don Philippo's house and waited till near dawn. Then appeared the tall, burly form of the negro, with an ugly wound on his forehead from the Englishman's knuckles. He went up to the door and was admitted after giving a peculiar whistle. Tom stole in behind him and followed him to the room in which Juarez was sitting, concealing himself behind a gauze curtain.

The nigger gave his report, evidently believing he had killed his victim, and as Juarez was paying out the price of blood he said to himself:

"Then I'm safe!"

The last word had barely passed his lips when Tom's knife descended with unerring precision and he fell forward, pierced through the heart.

The negro caught up a revolver from the table and fired after Tom's retreating figure. The bullet entered his side and the report roused a general hue and cry, under cover of which the negro made off with his plunder, while Tom, regardless of his wound, ran for his life.

A couple of hours later Dulcie was summoned from her brother's room to speak to Captain Clarence Paulet, and as she went out to the verandah she noticed something covered with a sheet on the floor.

She found herself face to face with Geoffry's rescuer, who explained in a few words, that, having come to inquire of the porter as to her brother's condition he had seen a dark figure crawl to the door of the sick-room. Knowing that the city was in an uproar, he had feared mischief, but had found the poor fellow was dying from loss of blood, and with his last breath he had gasped: "Juarez kill.... master; Tom killed him."

Dulcie went to look at the faithful creature, and then turned to the Englishman with glistening eyes:

"It was just splendid of you last night! You saved Geoff's life by that dash of yours. I saw you start, only I little knew *who* you were in such a hurry about."

"Well, I came here because I knew there were likely to be some rows going on. A Britisher loves a fight, only he likes to see it squarely done. I'm only sorry I hadn't time to brain that brute of a nigger, but he made off while I picked your brother up."

"Yes. You're a *man*," said Dulcie, in her quaint, quick way, holding out both her hands to him.

As he took them in his firm grasp he made the mental comment:

"And you're a lovely, winsome woman!" which sentiment probably was communicated by the expressive glance from his dark grey eyes, for Dulcie flushed prettily, and said something about going back to her brother.

The news of Don Philippo Juarez's murder caused little further excitement and no regret. He was the sort of man everyone expected would come to a violent end, and much more important events were cropping up every day to divert public attention from such trifles.

As soon as Geoffry was able to be moved he was taken out to Don Alfonzo's villa at Cerro, where Nita joyfully took her share in nursing him back to health and vigour.

Captain Paulet, who was enjoying a year's leave from his regiment in Barbadoes, "to see the fun," as he put it, was a frequent visitor during Geoffry's convalescence, and Nita grew a trifle jealous, till it dawned upon her that his interest was by no means wholly centred in the invalid. Having made this discovery, she had no scruple in furthering the happiness of others as well as her own; so that when Geoffry D. Faulkner, senior, arrived in Cuba, he found both his children awaiting his paternal matrimonial blessing.

The double wedding took place a few months later in New York, and Dulcie looks back on her visit to Cuba with mixed feelings of horror and happiness. As time goes on the latter sentiment becomes more and more in the ascendant.

Mary Fermor.

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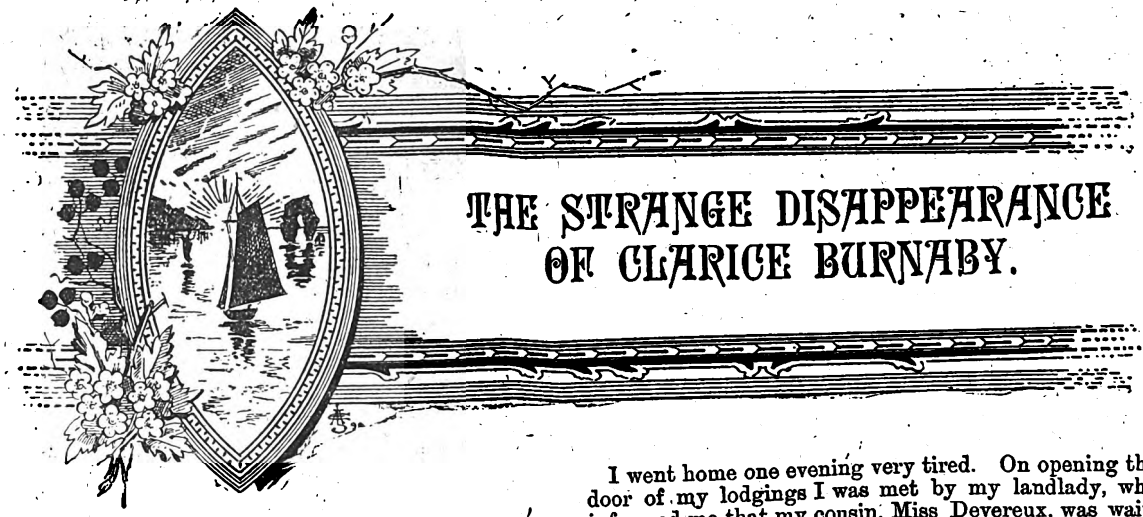

THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF CLARICE BURNABY.

CHAPTER I.

I Agree to Play Detective.

"Nigel Nugent," my Uncle James said solemnly, "all your money is lost!"

"Are you joking?" I demanded.

"Joking!" he said indignantly. "Is it a subject for joking? Yesterday you were heir to at least a couple of thousand a year—to-day you are penniless!"

I saw he was in earnest.

I asked: "How did it happen?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Speculation," he said concisely. "I meant to double your fortune, my boy, but I was foolish enough to put all my eggs into one basket, and they're smashed. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped."

Well! I thought this was pretty cool, but there wasn't any good in crying over it. So I asked him:

"What do you suggest my doing?"

"I have already found you a berth," he said, "in a shipping office, where, if you work hard, you'll be making a tidy sum in a few years' time."

I only caught the end of his sentence as I left the room.

I was most bitterly disappointed; I had been brought up in comparative luxury, and had certainly never dreamt that I should ever have to earn my bread. But that was the least important part of the matter. What troubled me most was that I must renounce for ever what had been, since my boyhood's days, the dream of my life—to be an artist!

To me "life" spelt "art," and when the door of that shipping office clanged behind me, and I surveyed the piles of books and the rows of desks my heart sank within me.

I left my uncle James's house, and took lodgings. I did not quarrel with him, but I believe he knew that I thought he had behaved abominably, and that, therefore, I could never be quite on the old friendly terms again.

I worked steadily for two weary years. One day was painfully like another, and I vaguely wondered whether I was turning into a machine. I supposed that I was destined to spend my life chained to my desk and my high stool; but in this I was mistaken.

I went home one evening very tired. On opening the door of my lodgings I was met by my landlady, who informed me that my cousin, Miss Devereux, was waiting to see me upstairs, and then retreated into her back-kitchen.

I was simply amazed by this information. The Devereux were very grand people, indeed. True, old Lord Devereux and my father had been first cousins; but then I had never seen him or his children, and our lives had been passed in different spheres. I went slowly upstairs.

The landlady had lit my lamp. It had a big shade of rose-coloured silk, and under its soft glow sat a pleasant-faced, fair-haired girl, who started up and came forward when she saw me.

"You are cousin Nigel Nugent, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, "I am." And then I paused, and stood waiting, feeling ridiculously shy.

She laughed suddenly.

"I'm so glad you're big," she said, "and you look like a person who would carry out what you undertook." I was six foot two.

"Thank you," I said soberly, "I dare say I should, but so far my 'undertakings' have been confined to an office stool and ledgers."

"How dreadful!" she said sympathetically. "But you must give up your office *pro. tem.*, we have something else for you to do—if you will only do it. It was quite my own idea, coming to see you about it. I got the address from Uncle James. You see, we are all in most terrible trouble, for Clarice Burnaby, my father's ward, has disappeared."

"What?" I said.

"It is quite true," she assured me, shaking her head sorrowfully. "Only next week she comes of age, and we were all going down to Burnaby Hall, which she owns, you know, and on her twenty-first birthday she was to succeed to £12,000 a year and that lovely old place."

"All this sounds very extraordinary," I said quietly. "But my dear cousin Amy, what can I do?"

"Do! Why find her!" she cried. "You will want money; you shall have it! You will probably have to employ detectives, to travel; in fact, you may and will want it for a hundred current expenses. But before we go into all that, tell me, will you undertake the task? Father simply can't. He is laid up with a very bad attack of gout in his eyes. Bernard is in India with

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his regiment, and I—well I can't go running about all over the place alone—it's not done, though I do think it's very absurd—I suppose I ought not to be here to-day, but I brought Mrs. Hesketh, our housekeeper, with me; she is downstairs."

She paused.

"You say 'Clarice has disappeared.' I must have more than that to go upon."

"But, my dear cousin," she returned, "I can't *give* you more to go upon. All I can tell you is this: On Wednesday evening we dressed and dined as usual; after dinner Clarice sang and I played, as usual. We bade each other good-night, and—next morning she was nowhere to be found. Her bed had not been slept in; a thick dress and fur cloak and cap were missing from her wardrobe, also all her jewels."

"That rather looks as if she had gone of her own free will," I remarked.

"Nothing of the kind," my cousin said quite angrily. "Clarice behave like that! What an idea! But I forgot—you don't know her; if you did, you would understand how impossible such a notion is."

"Well, then, if she didn't go of her own free will, somebody made her go; and that somebody, you may be sure, had a very strong reason for taking such extraordinary measures. The thing would be to find out if there *was* any reason, and, if so, who would benefit!"

"How clever you are!" Amy Devereux cried.

I shook my head. "It's not cleverness," I said, "it's common-sense."

"We won't argue," she returned, "but—will you undertake to try and find her? I know," she added, suddenly dropping her light tone and speaking very gravely, "that we have not got the smallest claim on you; that we have neither been cousinly nor friendly where you are concerned, but there was a reason which you could not know of, and which *I* only learnt quite recently. Your father ran away with Miss Warner and married her, and she was the girl my father was engaged to! He never forgave him, and although you had done him no harm, he somehow felt backward about renewing his relations with people he had purposely ignored for years, yet now it is to you I have come. Why I thought of you I cannot tell. I think it must have been an inspiration!"

"It may have been," I said. "In any case I will do my best to find your beloved Clarice."

She stood up and held out her hand.

"I knew you would agree," she said confidently; "you have got such a good face. Will you come to-morrow to our house in Belgrave Square, and I will give you a large photograph of Clarice. In it she wears a particularly quaint necklace, which came from Persia, and which, I am positive, is the only one of its kind in Europe, so it might be a clue."

The upshot of this meeting was that I sent in my resignation and prepared to begin my search.

CHAPTER II.

I PRESENTED myself in Belgrave Square on the following afternoon.

Amy had expected me earlier, she informed me, as she proceeded to hand me some tea.

"I have not been idling," I told her, "for I have already seen a detective and arranged for him to help me in my task."

Amy clapped her hands.

"I'll fetch Clarice's photograph, and you can take a good look at it so that you may recognise her in the event of finding out her hiding-place."

She left the room and came back presently with a very large photograph in a frame, which she handed to me.

I looked at it with interest, which was suddenly turned to dismay—I had seen that lovely face before, and I was horrified to remember *where* I had seen it. It was in a prison van two days before!

"Great goodness!" I exclaimed. "Are you sure this is Clarice Burnaby?"

Amy Devereux stared at me.

"Are you mad?" she asked, "or do you imagine that I am? Or what?"

I apologised hastily, and told her why I was so upset.

She turned very white, but said determinedly: "Then it was through some mistake—Clarice is incapable of committing any crime!"

There was silence for a moment, then Amy said suddenly:

"I quite forgot to tell you that I received a mysterious note this morning—here it is."

She handed it to me and I read the following:

"Be at Lady Linley's dance to-night and you will see—what you will see."

That was all. It had been dropped (Amy told me) into the letter-box.

"It may lead to a clue," she said, "and, if you will take me, I'll go to Aunt Bella's dance. She wants me to be there particularly, I know."

To this I agreed, and, punctually at half-past ten, I appeared in Belgrave Square to find Amy and an elderly chaperon awaiting my arrival. I told my cousin I would not dance, but would look on, in case she wanted me for anything. I thought it was most unlikely that she would. However, I was mistaken.

She came up to me breathless with excitement in the middle of a dance.

"Nigel!" she whispered, "there is a girl here *who* is wearing Clarice's Persian necklace!"

I started.

"Really!" I said. "Where is she? You are sure you are not mistaken?"

"Of course I am sure!" she said sharply. "Look for yourself—here she comes."

I saw a tall, dark girl coming towards us, talking to a little man, who Amy informed me, was a rich Jew, to whom the girl, a Miss Lyon, was engaged.

I hesitated for a moment; then I went up to Lady Linley.

"Will you introduce me to Miss Lyon?" I asked her.

She assented at once, and we crossed the room to where the lady and her little *fiancé* were sitting.

After the introduction, I begged for a dance, which she gave me, and, when the time came, I easily persuaded her to sit it out.

She said she was only too pleased, as she was very tired.

I talked of all sorts of things at first, and then I ventured to admire her necklace.

"It is so very quaint!" I said. "Would you mind telling me where you got it?"

She laughed.

"That is easily told," she said. "You know I am engaged to Mr. Isaacs. Well, we were passing that old curiosity shop in Leader Street—the one at the corner—and, seeing this in the window as we passed, I stopped

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to look at it, and I admired it so much that Hermann went in there and then and bought it for me—gave a perfectly fabulous sum for it, too."

I thanked her for telling me, and we talked of other things; but I mentally resolved to pay a visit to that shop in Leader Street the very next day, and take Amy Devereux with me, so that she could recognise any other pieces of Clarice Burnaby's jewels which might be there.

I was getting more and more interested and excited in the work I had undertaken, and was hardly surprised to find the detective waiting for me when I got back to my rooms, somewhere in the small hours of the morning.

"I have got a clue," he said, "but, really, it throws light on so extraordinary a story that you will hardly credit it."

"I don't know about that," I said; "I have had a few shocks on my own account to-day."

I piled coals on the fire and hunted out a coffee-pot and etceteras; the detective, meanwhile, told me his story.

"I travelled down to Burnaby Hall this morning," he said, "and made my way to the village inn. There I heard one or two rather queer things about Burnaby Hall and its owners."

"First of all, did you ever hear that Miss Clarice Burnaby has a twin-sister?"

"No, never!" I answered. "But you know I am very ignorant on the subject."

"So I understood from what you told me. The twin-sisters were brought up in totally different ways. Old Mr. Burnaby, who must have been from 'mine host's' account the most erratic and disagreeable of men, took the most violent dislike to Miss Clarice's twin-sister, Valencia, and sent her away from home to be brought up by some distant relations who were extremely poor, and were the most disreputable set imaginable.

"In such a home, with such an upbringing, is it surprising that Miss Valencia should develop all the worst characteristics of her race? She grew up passionate, headstrong, cruel, overbearing, and, sooner or later, she was bound to come to grief!" He paused, and added impressively: "She is at this moment in prison, and will be tried for the murder of John Russell, the son of the woman with whom she lived."

I stood stock-still, and stared at him.

"Then it was Valencia, not Clarice, whom I saw enter the prison van?" I muttered.

"Of course it was!"

"It is too terrible!" I said.

I then told him about the necklace, and the corner shop in Leader Street. He listened attentively.

"That must be your affair," he told me when I had done, "and be sure you take Miss Devereux with you. I shall be there at three. I'll buy, or pretend to buy, something, but you must not know me."

CHAPTER III.

When Amy and I got out of our hansom at the corner of Leader Street, I saw at a glance that the detective was already there. He was asking the prices of some queer old miniatures, and never even turned round when we entered the shop.

"You had a Persian necklace in your window the other day," I said. "Have you got it still? I am anxious to buy it."

"Very sorry, sir, but I sold it yesterday to Mr. Isaacs; you may know the gentleman?"

The proprietor laughed gently. He was a very superior-looking man; I liked his face, and, as I have before mentioned, I don't think faces can lie.

I drew him aside.

"Look here," I said, "I have a special reason for asking about that necklace, and would be extremely obliged to you if you could tell me who sold it to *you* in the first instance, and what that person was like."

"I will do my best, sir," the man said frankly. "It was a lady whose name I don't know, at least, not for certain; but she had a very beautiful face—a face strangely like a young lady who has been pointed out to me when she was riding in the Row—they said she was a great heiress, and her name was Miss Clarice Burnaby."

I suppressed an exclamation, and the man went on:

"But it was *not* Miss Clarice Burnaby—of that I am sure. This lady had the expression of a she-devil."

"I have got a theory," I said later to the detective. "Supposing that Clarice knew about her twin-sister. Perhaps she may have found it out, though I am told that, when Valencia was first sent away, Clarice was told that she was dead. The extraordinary likeness between the two sisters would be proof enough for anybody; and, supposing Valencia, being in such trouble, made up her mind to appeal to Clarice, would not Clarice, in her nobleness of heart, go at once to her sister's help?

"Again, knowing that Valencia had incurred the full penalty of the law, would Clarice not take with her the means of providing Valencia with the wherewithal to leave England, or, at least to go into some safe hiding-place? Surely the surmise is only natural.

"Apparently Valencia sold the jewels given her by Clarice. What of that? It strengthens my theory.

"Now, I will tell you what I am going to do. Through Lord Devereux, who is an intimate friend of the Home Secretary's, I am going to get an order to see this wretched girl Valencia in prison, and persuade her to tell me where Clarice has hidden herself. That she is in hiding does not surprise me in the least. Can't you see for yourself what such a terrible disgrace befalling her own sister must mean? Can't you understand how her one idea is to fly from everybody she knows?"

The detective shook me warmly by the hand.

"I wish you belonged to us," he said, "you would make your fortune in a few years' time!"

I laughed and told him he would have to go down to Burnaby Hall and find out where the people lived who brought Valencia up.

"Bless you, sir, there is no need of that. You could have seen it in the papers—it's in every one that's had an account of the murder—and I've got it jotted down in my pocket-book. I'll copy it for you."

He did so, and I pocketed the slip of paper, then hurried away to interview Lord Devereux on the subject of the order which was to allow me to see Valencia in prison.

It took some little time. However, I got the order at last, and betook myself to the prison.

When I was face to face with her I became definitely aware of several startling facts. One of these was that the woman who sat there was the woman I loved—yes, loved even from her photograph—already with all my heart and soul. Secondly, that it was not Valencia, but her sister Clarice. Thirdly, that there had therefore been some hideous mistake, and that it must be rectified at once, and by me.

Then I spoke to the girl, who looked at me piteously,

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but whose tongue seemed tied. I asked her questions, but she would not, or could not, answer, and the prison authorities told me that she had maintained that stony, unapproachable, terrible silence ever since she had been brought there. I went away with a very heavy heart.

My next move was to find out the house where Valencia had been brought up, the house where she had committed that murder.

To explain *why* I thought, felt, *knew* that it was Clarice, not Valencia, who was in prison, would be simply impossible. But I was absolutely sure of it—surely, sometimes, a man may rely on his instinct.

I drove to the little suburban villa, where these relations lived.

It was an ugly little yellowish "stucco" building, unrelieved by one shrub, and it made me shudder. I rang the bell.

The door was opened by a tall, thin woman. She was dressed in a rusty black gown; she was distinctly untidy, yet I knew that she was a lady directly she spoke.

Her eyes were swollen, with weeping, I felt sure, and I apologised for disturbing her.

"But, when I tell you that I am anxiously trying to find Miss Burnaby, I am sure you will forgive me," I said.

"One Miss Burnaby has just killed my only son," she said, slowly and bitterly. "She is in prison, and will be hanged; she deserves it. The other—yes! I can tell you where the other is. She is in St. Paul's Hospital, two streets off, so I am told. I have not seen her. I hate the Burnabys root and branch; if it wasn't that the old man's money stood at one time between me and starvation, I should never have consented to take his daughter in. She grew up to be his living image. That her surroundings, the people she met here, our rough, wild life, helped to develop inherent vice—why should I deny it? I don't deny it, but I can't say I care. I am past caring for anything—my son is dead!"

With that she turned and shut the door, leaving me on the step.

Well, I thought, there is nothing for it but to go to this hospital, and find out what I can.

It was growing dark by this time, and I took a wrong turn, then another, and at last concluded I had best take a hansom home and return next morning to pursue my inquiries.

A gentleman was waiting to see me, my landlady told me. I supposed it was the detective, and wondered whether he could throw any more light on the subject of the affair. But it was a stranger who sat under my rose-shaded lamp—a tall, dark man whom I had certainly never seen before.

He went straight to his business.

"I have come," he said, "to speak to you about that shocking murder which took place in Noble Street last week."

I merely bowed, and he went on:

"I have a favour to ask of you—a great favour."

His voice broke suddenly, and I bent forward in my chair to hear what he would say next.

"Valencia Burnaby," he said slowly, as if each syllable was wrung from him, "was to have been my wife next week. You may say what you like about her; that has nothing to do with me. I loved her, and I believe that, once the wife of an honest man, she would have become a different woman. Now, the favour I want you to do me is this: Valencia is dying; she is in St. Paul's Hospital."

"Then it is Clarice who is in prison," I interrupted.

He bowed.

"By her own arrangement," he said, "she thought that, if she had herself arrested as 'Valencia Burnaby,' her sister would have time meanwhile to get safely out of England.

"She had thought of everything. Valencia, it appears, when she had quarrelled with and stabbed John Russell, had been alone in the house with him; his mother was away for a few days.

"When Valencia found that she had killed him, she was nearly beside herself. Then the idea occurred to her to go and throw herself on her sister's protection. She had only learnt that she *had* a sister a short time before.

"She went down to Burnaby Hall, and Clarice, seeing as it were, her own features reproduced, saw at once that what she said as to their relationship was true, and, having hidden her in her room during the evening to avoid suspicion, she herself took her to the station some miles off, and brought her up to town. Then she went to the house in Noble Street, let herself in by Valencia's latch-key, dispatched the former to a shop in Leader Street with a wonderful Persian necklace which she knew would fetch a large sum, and, the police having got word somehow that something was up, went and arrested Clarice, thinking she was Valencia, which was exactly what she wanted them to do.

"But Valencia could not carry out her part of the programme. She took the necklace to Leader Street, and sold it for a very large sum. Then, so she has told me, she suddenly realised what Clarice had done, and she hastened back to Noble Street, so as to be there when the police came. But, on her way there, she was knocked down by a van and mortally injured. The doctors at St Paul's say if she lives three days it will be a triumph of science.

"She has dictated a full account of everything, of the death of John Russell, of Clarice's heroic effort to save and shield her by going herself to prison—she has omitted no single detail. This account has been witnessed by two doctors at St. Paul's whom I know and trust; and this document I propose to hand over to you, but I want you to promise me that you will not make it public until she is dead."

The man's voice sank to a husky whisper, and I felt a lump rising uncomfortably in my throat.

He took out a paper; our eyes met.

"You promise?" he said.

"I promise."

My promise, I knew, meant three more days of prison for Clarice; and yet I was positive that, had Clarice's wishes been consulted, she would have begged me so to act.

As things turned out, the doctors were wrong in calculations, for within twenty-four hours after the stranger's visit Valencia Burnaby was dead.

Need I detail after events?

Constance Craigie Halkett.

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Dr. Greenberg's Scientific Murder.

TALL, gaunt, austere in face and manners, such was Arthur Greenberg, F.R.C.S., the great brain specialist and scientist.

Although a wealthy man, his house, though situated in Mayfair, was so plainly furnished as to appear almost barren. This fact his neighbours put down to his well-known eccentricity. Arthur Greenberg was also forty and unmarried; this, however, called for no comment, for it was almost common property that the great medico had been unfortunate in an *affaire d'amour*.

Strange though it seemed to the outside public, Arthur Greenberg had once loved passionately. I say once advisedly, for on receiving his dismissal he hid his chagrin beneath the cloak of austerity and none knew, save himself, how he still loved the girl who had trifled with him and hated the man who had won her.

For four years he waited patiently for an occasion to cry quits with Elmsley-Wilmot, then fickle Fate placed his enemy within his power.

Arthur Greenberg was seated alone in his dining-room eating his solitary dinner, when the butler brought in a card, bearing the superscription:

"Laurence Elmsley-Wilmot."

He glanced at the pasteboard, then said:

"Is Mr. Wilmot in the surgery?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he state the nature of his business?"

The dark brow contracted.

"Mrs. Wilmot gave me the card, sir; there has been an accident——"

Greenberg rose hurriedly to his feet and, without waiting for the man-servant to finish his explanation, left the room and entered the surgery.

There were four people in the room besides Mrs. Wilmot: a policeman, a cabman, and a gentleman who had brough Wilmot to the house.

"Mrs. Wilmot, I believe," said Greenberg coldly bowing, a dull flush rising to his temples. "I hear that an accident has occurred."

"Knocked down by a cab, sir, and broke his head!" interjected the policeman.

"I am glad to have been so near at hand," said Greenberg professionally. "Will you kindly leave the surgery, please," he continued, approaching the operating couch, on which the injured man had been placed, and making a rapid inspection of his injuries. "This will require skilful handling, I assure you."

The order was promptly obeyed, with one exception.

Clarice Wilmot stayed behind, and closing the door, said entreatingly:

"Arthur."

"Yes?"

He turned sharply round to face her.

"You will save him, won't you? Do your best for the sake of old times—I love him so!"

The soft light which had stolen into his eyes faded as he heard her last sentence, and his pupils became suddenly dilated as he bent over a drawer and took out his instruments.

"I believe I remarked that I must have the surgery to myself, Mrs. Wilmot," he said. "I regret that I cannot make an exception to the rule which I have just laid down."

"I must not stay?"

"I regret you cannot."

He approached the patient and sponged the injured man's head.

"Arthur."

Once more she came towards him.

"Mrs. Wilmot, I must request you to leave the room; this is a very delicate case to treat, and I must be absolutely alone."

"You will do your best, won't you?" she cried entreatingly. "You won't let anything which has occurred in days gone by, prevent you——"

"I fail to understand you," Greenberg replied stiffly. "Will you kindly withdraw, Mrs. Wilmot."

His tone brooked no disobedience, and Mrs. Wilmot left the room.

As soon as alone, Greenberg bent over the unconscious man, deftly setting the cracked bone, sewing up the wound and bandaging the head, then he paused and sitting down at his desk glanced at the motionless figure.

"So she loves him," he mused vengefully. "Up to the present I deemed her a victim of circumstances, but now!"—he rose, and opening a drawer took from its

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recesses a fine needle, feeling its point with his thumb—"now I will revenge myself on her, on him!"

A savage light danced into his steel grey eyes, and his austere face became transformed by a fierce glow of exultation as he crept noiselessly across the thick carpet to the door, and bolted it without the least rasping sound being audible.

Then, walking to the couch, he bent over the motionless form, and taking a tiny phial of chloroform from his pocket, applied it to the nostrils of the prostrate man.

He then opened the windows to allow an exit to the suffocating fumes, then once more he bent over Wilmot.

"Some people, if they found out how you died, would say that you had been murdered," he whispered hoarsely, addressing the helpless man. "Murder, however, is a hard word to apply to just retribution, and I shall have the satisfaction of crying 'quits' to both you and your wife, without the fear of swinging for it. You will die in a few days, my friend, and your autopsy will reveal that you died from apoplexy."

He smiled complacently as he lifted the left eyelid of his victim and applied the point of the fine needle which he held to the lacrymal duct and forced the tiny steel barb upwards.

A moment later he had withdrawn it, tossed the needle carelessly in the drawer, and, wiping the tiny speck of blood away from the corner of his victim's eye, opened the surgery door and announced to Mrs. Wilmot who was anxiously pacing the lobby that her husband was on the high road towards recovery, and that he had better stay there for a few days.

Clarice Wilmot gratefully accepted the offer, and forthwith Wilmot was moved upstairs.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently for all that you have done," she said gratefully.

"I have only accomplished what any ordinary practitioner could have done," he replied calmly.

"True," she said thoughtfully. "But somehow, when —when they brought Lawrence here, I—I thought you would have refused your help."

"A doctor cannot refuse to lend his aid in an emergency. In the absence of Doctor Ailsay, my assistant, I attended your husband, madam."

Clarice Wilmot might have been the veriest stranger, to judge by the coldness of his voice.

"You will never forgive me, I think, Arthur," she remarked wistfully, after a pause.

"Your supposition is correct, Mrs. Wilmot," he replied stiffly. "Unfortunately I am so constituted that I never forget nor can I ever forgive an injury. I must now bid you good evening, as I have some work to do. Meanwhile," he added courteously, "pray consider this house as your own till your husband has recovered. I will give orders for Mr. Wilmot to be carried upstairs."

Then, without noticing her outstretched hand, he turned on his heel and entered the dining-room to finish his half completed meal.

Two days elapsed, then Wilmot succumbed to an apparent fit of apoplexy.

It was Greenberg who broke the news to Clarice.

"Your husband died of apoplexy," he explained briefly, when asked the cause of his death, "Doctor Ailsay has, however, the audacity to disagree with me on the cause of Mr. Wilmot's decease, and asks for an inquest, as he cannot thoroughly determine the nature of the fit which ended your husband's life. Of course, as he has been Mr. Wilmot's attending physician, I cannot oppose his desire. If, however, you are opposed to such a mode of procedure I will endeavour to deter him from his purpose."

"No," she replied listlessly. "Let him do as he likes. I—I should prefer an inquest."

Doctor Greenberg bowed.

"As you please," he replied, leaving her presence.

Two more days elapsed before the coroner's jury gave their decision as to the cause of Wilmot's decease.

"Death due to apoplexy," they declared after hearing the evidence, and Greenberg smiled triumphantly at Ailsay.

"I beg to differ with the verdict!" exclaimed a voice in staccato accents.

There was a buzz of excitement in the room on hearing the words, then all eyes were turned on Doctor Ailsay, who rose to his feet.

"I beg to differ with the verdict," he repeated.

Greenberg sneered openly, though a strange, unaccountable unrest oppressed him.

The Coroner's brows contracted as he asked:

"Indeed! Might I inquire what you consider the nature of his disease, then?"

"To a fit certainly akin to apoplexy—so much akin, indeed, as to be practically the same!" replied Ailsay in low, ringing tones.

A distinct sensation greeted the young doctor's words.

"And what is the name of this malady you speak of, sir?"

"It has no name," replied Ailsay evenly. "But whilst apoplexy is due to natural causes, the fit to which the unfortunate Mr. Wilmot succumbed is due to artificial causes, primarily."

The surprise felt by those who heard the young doctor's remarks became audible.

"Kindly continue, sir," said the Coroner. "And tell me what is your impression of the nature of the disease, as you appear to be so certain of having discovered it."

"To coin a name for the disease momentarily," said Ailsay grimly, "I will call it apoplexy Greenbergia."

Greenberg started violently, his austere face becoming even greyer than was its wont.

"You will notice," said Ailsay, crossing the room to where the dead man lay, "that the lachrymal duct"—he raised the left eyelid as he spoke—"is slightly distended. Can you explain why it should be so?"

The Coroner became interested; perhaps after all there was something in Ailsay's theory.

"With a microscope" (Ailsay took one from his pocket, and handed it to the Coroner), "you will note that at the orifice of the lachrymal duct there is a slight abrasion, and the entrance to the duct is bent slightly to one side. Am I not correct?"

"Perfectly," remarked the Coroner, examining the duct through the microscope; "but what has this to do with your theory?"

"It is the basis of it," replied the young doctor earnestly, "that abrasion is not the result of Nature or accident, it is the result of a pointed instrument being introduced, having for object the attainting of a capillary vein in the cerebral cavity——"

"Surely such a statement coming from you, Doctor Ailsay, is ridiculous," interjected Greenberg sarcastically. "I had imagined your studies in medicine had been more complete than they apparently have been, and I always have understood that the lachrymal ducts, far

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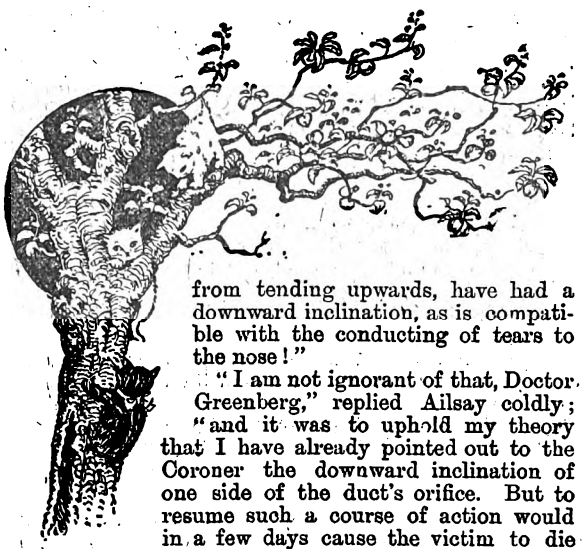

from tending upwards, have had a downward inclination, as is compatible with the conducting of tears to the nose!"

"I am not ignorant of that, Doctor Greenberg," replied Ailsay coldly; "and it was to uphold my theory that I have already pointed out to the Coroner the downward inclination of one side of the duct's orifice. But to resume such a course of action would in a few days cause the victim to die from effects hardly distinguishable from those produced by apoplexy."

"But, my dear sir," cried the Coroner alarmed, "such a course of action would be——?"

"Murder?—Precisely!—Scientific murder."

Greenberg shifted uneasily.

"Such a theory is absurd," he remarked. "And can only emanate from a diseased brain. The instrument is not invented which could pass through such a minute duct, without tearing it terribly."

"A needle could!" remarked Ailsay coldly. "A very fine needle, as you, Dr. Greenberg have often remarked to Doctors Wainwright, Edsley, and myself! You have just remarked that my theory is the emanation of a diseased brain, yet it has ever been a favourite subject of yours."

Greenberg paled visibly.

"You are labouring under a delusion, sir," he said painfully.

"Doctor Edsley and Doctor Wainwright will prove that I am not!"

"Then, sir," exclaimed the Coroner, "do you think that Mr. Wilmot has been murdered?"

"Emphatically! and I have the instrument which caused the gentleman's decease. It was found by Doctor Wainwright and by him given to me."

Once more his words caused a sensation.

"This needle"—he took a tiny roll of tissue paper from his waistcoat pocket and, undoing it, took a rusted needle from its centre—"was found by the desk in Doctor Greenberg's surgery."

Greenberg grew ashen-hued, and shivered as though with cold.

"And whom do you suppose is the murderer?" asked Greenberg, with a brilliant assumption of carelessness.

"Yourself, Doctor Greenberg," he answered coldly.

Greenberg reeled, then laughed wildly.

"Why not yourself?" he asked harshly. "You attended him."

"Not till he became conscious," replied Ailsay coldly. "Mr. Wilmot complained much about the pain he suffered in his eye. Doctor Wainwright was with me when I returned from my round, to your house, and you gave Mr. Wilmot in my charge. Together we examined the eye and came to the conclusion that you had tried the experiment that you had so often said was infallible. Do you forget that Doctor Wainwright asked permission to go into your surgery for the loan of a scapel? I thought not! Well, sir, he returned with the scapel, and also with this needle!"

"You lie!" shouted Greenberg hoarsely. "This is a fiendish fabrication got up to ruin me. I accuse you of being the murderer, you liar! I had no motive to murder him."

"I imagine Mrs. Wilmot can supply us with a motive if required, at the Central Criminal Court," replied Ailsay drily.

"You lie!" shouted Greenberg, pallid with fear. "You lie!"

"Have him arrested," cried some of the jury.

The request stung Greenberg to madness, for with a hoarse cry of rage the murderer sprang at Ailsay, but the latter, expecting some such occurrence, was prepared, and sent him reeling to the ground from the effects of a well-planted blow between the eyes.

When he staggered to his feet he found himself in the grip of a constable, and left the room with handcuffs on his wrists.

As Ailsay had suggested, Mrs. Wilmot gave a very good motive for the crime at the trial, whilst Doctor Ailsay, Wainright, and Edsleys' evidence was brief and conclusive.

Doctor Arthur Greenberg did not, however, suffer the extreme penalty of the law, owing to the defence of his lawyer, who stuck gamely to his plea of the prisoner's irresponsibility of action.

Though he cheated the gallows, however, he did not escape incarceration for life in the Broadmoor Criminal Asylum.

Tristam K. Monck.

Result of the "Paragraph" Competition.

The best paragraph made up of odd lines out of *Short Stories*, dated February 25th, has been sent us by Mr. Alfred Sansom, of 56 Tudor Road, Hackney, N., and his five friends. A prize of £1 has been sent to each.

		Page.	Column.
A. Sansom, 56 Tudor Rd., Hackney, N.E.	As I gazed fascinated by the v r/ horror of the s e n,	226	2
A. M. Sansom, 56 Tudor Rd., Hackney, N.E.	both shots rang out as one, sharp and spiteful, on the	233	2
Jane Lewis, 2 Basing Place, Kingsland Rd.	sward.	232	2
Harriett Frary, 43 De Beauvoir Sq., Kingsland.	I sprang across the short distance that separated us;	235	2
Elizabeth Smith, 20 Waterloo St., Haggerston.	I saw Valette was regarding me closely as I raised	225	2
Lizzie Barfield, 50 Haggerston Rd., N.E.	the dying man, who was fast growing unconscious.	238	1

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Perdita's Parent.

We were a travelling Shakesperian company, and Perdita our leading lady. She had only been on the stage a short while, but showed remarkable talent. All the men pronounced her a genius, the ladies were not unanimously of that opinion, but they admitted "she knew how to make the most of herself," whatever that ambiguous phrase might mean. She was adorably beautiful—that again was the male opinion—and aroused the latent chivalry in our natures to such an extent, that the other fayre dames pronounced us "positively ridiculous!"

We defended ourselves thus: Acting was an art, we said. As actors we were, therefore, artists. Art was the expression, of the perception of, and devotion to, the beautiful. Perdita and beauty were synonomous terms—argal, we were her devotees. I doubt if our syllogisms would have passed muster with a Jevons, but Love's logic is not exacting.

Perdita was reputed wealthy.

"My boy," said Miggs, our low comedian (at £2 10s. a week), who was always "in the know," "she draws five solid quidlets on her own every Saturday, week in, week out, independent of what she gets for mumming. I had it from Florizel, and you know how thick he is with the lady. I wonder she don't take out her own 'crowd' and star. I would!" And Miggs explained how it was possible to play any Shakesperian piece with a company of eight, provided they were *experienced* people, that is, people who could double or treble parts if required, without keeping the stage waiting.

Perdita's parent chaperoned her daughter.

Ah! yes, our fair Princess was guarded by her Dragon, an "Army and Navy Stores mamma," whose "late lamented" had been in one of the services. She had "views" for Perdita, and I suppose the stage had been selected as a happy medium for focussing them. Gas and limelight are powerful influences for attaining that end, as Debrett can show us.

Her daughter was rapidly acquiring fame in the provinces; in a few months her novitiate would be over. Then would come offers from great London managers a West-end *début*, cheers, triumphs, paragraphs, and the gorgeous, glittering, golden transformation scene to wind up the "opening" of life's pantomime at St. George's, Hanover Square. To the dragon, actors were, of course, quite impossible people.

However, she was not generally ungracious, and at times a certain grim humour would percolate through her granite formality.

On a journey she was a talking topographical dictionary, replete with the history of every estate we passed near, its revenues and encumbrances, including a biographical sketch of each landed proprietor, showing a piquant and intimate knowledge of each branch and twig of his family tree, their health, of decay, buds and blossoms.

Most of us were young and democratic, and scoffed at titles and territory, blue blood and Barons and the dragon, with staccato shake of the head peculiar to her, pronounced us "pert boys," to whom nothing and nobody were sacred—we looked at Perdita and forgave her.

Florizel was our leading man and stage manager. He had wavy auburn hair (Muggs swore he had once extracted a much advertised "curler" from the inside of his collar), large beseeching eyes with dark lashes (Muggs declared in a keen east wind Florizel shed black tears), and a musical voice.

He wasn't quite popular with the men, although we were not unfriendly. Truth to say, he was a somewhat inflated personage, and given to posing; but a simulated earnestness of manner and speech served to conceal his egotism, and carried the conviction to inexperienced and impressionable female natures that had lit the fire of poesy and passion, that they fancied they observed burning on his eloquent lips, or blazing through the windows of his soul.

We prided ourselves on being a rather superior company, intellectually and sartorially. We were wont to discuss the influence on English Dramatic Literature of certain Scandinavian and Belgian "Masters," and we declaimed against Melodrama with a wealth of invective

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calculated to make the fortunes of an Adelphi playwright.

Knickerbockers of wondrous patterns and startling stockings were in vogue amongst us; and our raiment generally was of that fantastic order dear to the fancy of modern theatrical youth.

Florizel never wore knickerbockers, but his garments were invariably *well built*. Made up, and dressed for Romeo, or Orlando, he certainly looked picturesque! Perdita certainly thought so, for his broad chest and shapely limbs pervaded the pages of her sketch book.

They were both devoted to their art, of that there could be no doubt. Hardly a morning passed but they found it necessary, after the general rehearsal, to run through some of their own scene together. But there was no avoiding the watchful eyes of the Dragon, for though she permitted these dramatic duties in the interests of her daughter's histrionic training, the proprieties were rigidly observed, and the Demon of scandal propitiated by her saving presence. She would sit in front nodding her grey head with keen appreciation of some well delivered line, or dubiously shaking it at a somewhat too impassioned embrace.

Rehearsal over, Perdita was marched off under her sole escort; for in the Dragon's eye this intimation was plainly to be read: "Out of business young men are warned off." One morning, however, Perdita arrived at rehearsal unaccompanied—the Dragon was temporally indisposed. There must have been many cuts in their usual concluding scenes, for a quarter of an hour after the company's dismissal, the pair were observed walking towards the river, away from the abode of the Dragon. Possibly Rosalind's relations with Orlando formed their engrossing topic of conversation, and deep in their Forest of Arden (where are no clocks) they wandered on.

Some two hours later, as they were returning hastily by the Market Square, Perdita gave a terrified little squeal, for there glaring at them from the opposite pavement stood the re-vivified Dragon. Retreat was useless, bold measures alone likely to avert humiliation and discomforture.

"Oh! mother, dear, so glad to see you're better. Mr. Florizel was kindly escorting me home. What's for lunch? I'm so hungry—been for such a long—er—rehearsal," gasped Perdita with fiery cheeks, and a miserable attempt at composure.

The Dragon thrice shook her horrid head, as if gathering all her available venom ere she struck, and then gasped:

"I have been sitting shivering in that detestable barn of a theatre one hour awaiting your pleasure. There is one cold, hard boiled egg for your luncheon. Perhaps Mr. Florizel will honour you further by sharing it; he deserves some reward for his conduct. Come!" The prospect of such an exhilarating banquet apparently had no charms for Florizel, for he bowed low, and meekly murmured a polite refusal.

Candour compels me to confess that we others secretly rejoiced at Florizel's discomforture. He had always been terribly conceited, but somehow since it had come to his knowledge that Perdita considered him "such a manly figure," he had become intolerable. We all agreed that he wasn't the right man for her (with individual mental reservations as to who was) and when a rumour got abroad that he was a married man, the cup of his iniquity was filled indeed, and we were of one mind that it was shameful of him to make love to our peerless leading lady, and that for the honour of the company it ought to be stopped.

Anyhow, the Dragon put her veto on the extra rehearsals, and the baffled Lothario had to make the most of his opportunities for dulcet whisperings and languishing glances whilst waiting in the wings and passages at night. The Dragon had scotched, but not killed the snake.

One evening, I was sitting by the green-room door awaiting my entrance, Florizel and Perdita, on the other side of the room, were as usual in earnest conversation, he bending over her in a graceful attitude, she looking smilingly up into his face. Presently the Dragon entered, quietly—she did not notice me—and they apparently were unconscious of her presence. She raised her lorgnettes and looked steadily at Florizel with a contracted brow, while I sat quietly awaiting developments.

Suddenly I saw her give a little start, and stare hard at Florizel's legs, and I nearly shrieked with delight when I observed that one of them showed an abnormal growth of calf very much out of its right position. The Dragon's head moved in the peculiar manner I have described, and with a grim smile she crossed over to them, and to my surprise took a seat and joined affably in the conversation, becoming apparently more earnest and interested.

My attention was in a moment again riveted by a most extraordinary proceeding on the Dragon's part. I saw her surreptitiously remove a long bonnet pin from her head, and with it deliberately prod Florizel in the leg—it might have been a wooden one, for he never winced. She repeated the operation on the fellow limb with no further result.

Then like a secret assassin she rose, and while continuing the conversation with great vivacity, stabbed him between the shoulders, Florizel was again profoundly unmoved.

The whole operation was executed with such skill and secrecy that Perdita saw nothing.

The next moment beginners were called, and Florizel, with a characteristic glance at himself in the pier glass, caught sight of his misplaced muscles. A look almost of terror came into his face as he swiftly readjusted them, giving a furtive glance at Perdita, who, all unconscious of the incident, hurried from the room. I followed Florizel, and left the Dragon moving her head more jerkedly than ever, while a peculiarly meaning smile played round the corners of her mouth.

Florizel and I shared a dressing-room, and the following evening while making up for my part in *As You Like It*, I noticed him diving into his dressing basket and scattering the contents with that systemless persistency peculiar to most exasperated losers of property.

After he had made a hurried tour of inspection round the room, including an uninvited visit to my basket, I ventured to ask if he had lost anything.

"Look here," he groaned, "which of you boys has been having a game with my pads?"

I assured him truthfully that I, at least, was guiltless.

"You had better ask Muggs, he's our practical joker," I added.

Muggs and the other members of the company were in turn catechised, and all earnestly protested their innocence.

"Half hour, please, gentlemen," shouted the call-boy, a minute later.

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And Florizel threw himself headlong into his basket for what proved another futile search.

"Well, the curtain shan't go up till they're found," he shouted, flinging himself savagely into a dressing-room chair, which promptly avenged this insult to its age and decrepitude by collapsing like the Deacon's Wonderful Shay—all at once—and depositing Florizel, minus his dignity, on the floor.

"Here, call-boy," he yelled, rushing to the top of the stairs, "send round to the front and tell Mr. Harland I want him at once."

But Mr. Harland, our business manager, had gone on to the next town, so Mr. Bowsett the local manager appeared, and the situation was explained to him.

Mr. Bowsett was sympathetic, and would make all enquiries, but in the meantime begged Florizel to go on with his dressing; there was a capital house, and the curtain must go up punctually at the advertised time.

Mr. Bowsett's inquiries proved fruitless. Florizel stormed, and I regret to add swore, and refused point-blank to go on. Then Mr. Bowsett waxed warm and argued the point with highly-coloured vehemence, throwing threats of damages for breach of contract, with all attendant pains and penalties, concluding his oration with a pathetic picture of a loyal public disappointed of one of their prime favourites, until finally by a mixture of threats and cajolery he induced Florizel to complete his incomplete toilet as the youngest son of old Sir Roland. "Oh what a falling off was there!" "Meagre were his looks." "His youthful hose well saved a world too wide for his shrunk shank." Shoulders that erstwhile were squarely set, now sloped away like the neck of a champagne bottle. He was a doleful Orlando that night, the audience greeted him with a titter, but, with the exception of a few pointed pleasantries from the gallery boys, were merciful.

At his first meeting with Rosalind before the wrestling scene, I saw Perdita give a startled puzzled look, and as she eyed him up and down it was with a peculiar emphasis she spoke the line: "Is yonder the man?" There was a world of feeling too in Orlando's delivery of: "My better parts are all thrown down, and that which he stands up is but a quintrain, a mere lifeless block," and a deep tragic note in: "O! poor Orlando, thou art overthrown!"

Overthrown he certainly was, for the Dragon had worked her will.

When he spoke to Perdita as they came off the scene she appeared to answer with an hysterical sob, or was it a girlish giggle? I certainly heard hearty laughter coming from her dressing room as I passed and distinctly caught the words:

"Padded sham. Oh! what a pair of spindle shanks!"

Florizel's pads reappeared the following night as mysteriously as they had vanished, but the spell was broken, and the idol smasher, the "salt estranging" sea of ridicule had washed out all the landmarks of her love.

Perdita soon after left us to the general regret to "star" with her own company, and I noticed that she inserted an advertisement in a prominent theatrical organ to the effect that she required a *robust* actor for her leading man.

LESLIE CROWN.

£1,000 PRIZE COUPON.

Further particulars respecting this Competition, which closes on Monday, April 17th, will be found on page 366.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

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- A PRIZE OF -

£1,000 FOR A "S.S." READER.

£1,000 £1,000

£25 FOR A NEWSAGENT! £50 FOR WITNESSES!

- - MAKING A TOTAL OF £1,075! - -

THE BIGGEST PRIZE EVER OFFERED FOR SO SIMPLE A TASK.

For Coupon see page 365.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon on page 365, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1889.

Then write down your name and address, and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtained this copy of "S.S." to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for the boys, and £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

THIS PRIZE IS OFFERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "M. A. P." "SUNDAY READER," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," AND "PASTIMES."

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A WEDDING TOMBSTONE.

An American Home Life Story.

"So you never heard tell of Mary Barbour's weddin tombstone?" said grandma in a tone of surprise. "I thought everybody knew about that."

I confessed the most abject ignorance and immediately drew up to the fire. This was partly to gain information and partly because, although the fireplace was wide and deep-throated, and big logs were blazing in it, there were biting draughts of stinging November air coming in at the loosely-fitting door. For grandmother would not be persuaded to leave the home that had been hers for fifty years, and which now showed some signs of decay.

She was knitting vigorously by the firelight, for, although she had all the modern conveniences of heating and lighting, her big fireplace cast its ruddy glow out into the room through all the long winter evenings. I was an angular school-girl of fifteen then, with a great love of the romantic, and was on a four weeks' visit at the old homestead. After knitting a few minutes in silence, she began:

"You've seen the old stone house down on the bank of the river, all shut in with pines and evergreens? It's nigh a hundred years old. When I was born it had been built ten years. When I was a young married woman the Barbours came to live there, and they was proud, high-feelin' people that nobody could get acquainted with. That's what made 'em take it so dretful hard when—but here I am, ahead of my story. You see, Mr. Barbour embezzled or did something of that kind, and went to prison. After he had been there a year he up and hung himself, and that is the last of him as far as my story goes.

"Then his wife and little boy shut themselves up in the stone house and never went outside the gate hardly. She'd had a good deal of schooling, his mother had, and she taught him herself as long as she could, and then he bought books and studied by himself. He tried going to school when he was a small boy, but one of the scholars threw it at him about his father, and Mortimer nearly killed him, and after that his mother kep' him home. And she was a proud woman, was Mis' Barbour, and lofty and severe in her ways. She wouldn't let nobody sympathise with her, which everybody wanted to, as there's so little going on in a place like this.

"Mis' Barbour was real selfish with her grief, so she got herself disliked, besides folks bein' suspicious after the way her husband turned out. What did they live on? Oh, the boy farmed it, and later they do say he wrote books on what they call natural history, though to my mind it was the most unnatural stuff I ever heard tell of—all about beetles and insects with three hundred muscles in their heads, and as could carry twelve hundred times their own weight on their own backs, which everybody knows he must have got up as he went along. They were dreadfully taken up with each other, he and his mother, and she believed everything he said was so, even about the bugs and beetles. But she was his own born mother, and that explains it.

"When she died, Mortimer liked to went crazy. He planted her grave with violets and pansies, and at the head was a white marble monument he had gone to the city for—nothing nearer would suit him. But he didn't display no taste. Nothing on it, my dear, but the old lady's name and the date she died—not an angel, nor a cherub, or a lamb, or a broken rosebud, nor a bit of verse. And yet he always seemed to set store by her.

"Then Mortimer, he just stuck to the old house, same as ever, though now he was alone. I used to wonder how it seemed to him late at night hearin' the swash of the river and the sighing' of them pine trees. He wore his hair long as was the custom in them days, and it was curly up at the ends, like the pictur' of John Wesley. But he had eyes that went right through you and come out the back of your head. And he never set foot into the meeting-house.

"Now, he was the last man in the village I'd ever said would got married. But as sure as you set there,

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when the little milliner, Mary McAllister, came into the place, he was struck. That wasn't nothing strange—all the young fellows was—but, mind you she was struck, too. No, you wouldn't 'a' thought it. Every body warned her, and told her about his father's hangin' himself in prison, and how queer his mother was, and that Mortimer was as odd as Dick's hatband and wouldn't come to no good. She listened, with her eyes big and cool and a little hot patch of red on her cheeks like a daub of paint, but she never said a word. That was Mary McAllister all over, never to say a blessed word, but go and do just as she saw fit. First we knew they was engaged, and it was given out in chapel. Next day her aunt she lived with, came in to see me, and wrung my hands, sayin' she wouldn't be surprised if Mary was murdered before the year was out. What can you think of a man who lives like a hermit, and had a crooked father and a peculiar mother?

"But we wasn't prepared for the worst. A day or two before the wedding, in comes old Mis' Johnson and says—'Shut up the doors tight,' says she, 'and the winders. I've got something to tell you that'll make your hair rise up,' she says, whisperin' like. So I shut the door, she a workin' her hands together like one possessed. 'It's about Mary,' she went on. 'He's been and got a tombstone for her.' 'Who?' asked I, as if I didn't know, but my knees knocked together and I felt a bit sick. 'Mortimer Barbour,' says she. 'My grandson, Jonnie, was after a bird's nest in a tree over in his yard. The limb broke, and down he went right into the roof of the old out-house that hasn't been used for years. It went in under him like tinder, and as soon as he could pick himself up and found no bones broke, what should he see but a new white gravestone, a-settin' up in a corner against some rubbish. He went up to it, and he says as true as the Bible he saw "Mary Barbour" cut on it, and the date she is a-goin' to die.' 'I don't believe it,' says I, but I was all a-faint, and had to go and make us each a cup of tea, so we could bear up under it.

"As soon as I said I didn't believe it Mis' Johnson said we'd go ourselves and see. And we did go, Mortimer bein' away in the fields, and got into the out-house. It was towards dark, and we shook with cold, though it was a warm day in June. We'd brought a bit of candle with us, and Mis' Johnson lit it, and then we saw—land sakes, child, how scairt you look; don't get so near the fire, you'll be all ablaze. Where was I? Oh, we saw the stone, just as Johnnie said, a real gravestone of white marble, and on it the name 'Mary Barbour,' with the date 'Sept. 5, 18—,' below it. But the rest we couldn't make out. 'He's goin' to let her live three months; may Heaven forgive him,' says old Mis' Johnson, meanin' different from what she said.

"The next day I went to Mary, and told her the whole truth. And would you believe it, she said she thought Mis' Johnson and I had no business prying about other people's affairs? 'If he had bought a thousand gravestones I'd have him just the same,' says she. So they was married the next day, but Mary was white as a ghost, and she trembled so she could hardly walk. They went right away, and we threw some old shoes after 'em, but all the wishin' of joy was make-believe, and I never saw a bride with such a white, set face, never looking at her husband nor yet us.

"They were away nearly three months; then they came back to the old house. But folks said they wasn't happy, that she was as cold as a stone, and he was always at his books and old insects. One day I got a letter askin' me to come and see her. She was lyin' down on a lounge when I got there, white and so thin, with big eyes with a sorry, hungry look in 'em. But she had on a smart gown, and was as pretty as a pictur'. As soon as we'd shaken hands and I'd taken off my bonnet and shawl, she says, 'Do you know what day to-morrow is?' Then I thought it up, and said it was the 5th of September. 'The day I am to die,' she says in a soft, quiet way. Then I up and asked her if Mortimer had been ill-treatin' her, but she put up her finger, and said, 'Not a word to my husband; he doesn't know I know it.' Then she said he was awful good to her, but she couldn't get that gravestone out of her head day or night. All at once it came to me how matters was; she'd been too proud to give him up, besides her likin' him, too; and she'd been too proud to tell him about it; and so betwixt the two the poor child was almost beat out. She asked me if I would go out to the out-house with her to see the stone. She wanted to see it and was afraid to go alone.

"Then a queer thing happened. Mortimer had come into the next room while she'd been talkin', and heard every word. I never saw anybody so stirred up as he was when he came in.

"'Is it that tombstone that has stood between us?' he said, and went on to explain that it had been ordered for his mother. He was such a bad writer that the stone-cutter mistook the name Marie for Mary, and after the stone was half done it was found out, and they made him pay for it. So, as it was his, they brought it to him, and, not knowing what to do with it, he just set it up in the out-house and forgot all about it.

"Mary, she began to cry, and then they fell to huggin' and kissin' each other, as if they hadn't met for years. I tried to put a word in to calm 'em, but they saw me without seeing me, and heard me without hearing me, so I put on my bonnet and shawl and came away and left 'em.

"After that? Dear me, they was the happiest couple you ever saw. They used the gravestone for a front doorstep, wrong side up, and it was real pretty. Mary was dretful proud of him, and believed every word he wrote about them bugs and beetles, just as his mother did, which only goes to show the old sayin' is true, that love is blind."

T. Green.

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THE PRINCESS ILSE.

A Romance of Olden Days.

THE last lord of Ilsenburg had been carried to his grave ten years before, and his daughter, Lady Ilse, sat in her great castle, sad and alone.

In obedience to her father she had married a distant cousin, Lord Garbrecht, in order to keep up the old family name; for the house of Ilsenburg was a proud and mighty one.

Princess Ilse's brief wedded life had not been happy; the loveless marriage ended in disappointment and bitterness, yet, when Garbrecht lay on his death-bed he seized her hand wildly, and cried:

"Swear to me that thou wilt wed no other. Swear to be true to me for ever."

And Lady Ilse, being scarce more than a child in years, accustomed to implicit obedience, took the oath.

Three years passed after Lord Garbrecht's death, and still Lady Ilse remained a widow. Though the flower of the land presented themselves as her suitors, none seemed to find favour in her eyes.

When in a particularly dreamy mood, she would have her pony saddled, and ride away from Ilsenburg. The road which she took on these occasions was steep, and a queer-looking net-work of roots spread over it.

A sort of pleasant melancholy always came to Lady Ilse in this rocky solitude. At a certain point she left her horse in the care of the attending squire while she climbed up to a great height. When she had gained her destination she threw herself down under the dusky shade of the firs and beeches, and gazed thoughtfully into the distance. A happy memory then came to her, a smile stole over her face, and she saw herself a child again, and lived again a part of her life.

She had sat upon this very stone. Her lap was filled with wild flowers. Suddenly there appeared before her a boy with dark locks; with flashing eyes, as she looked at him in amazement, he fell at her feet, crying out:

"Oh, sweet Princess Ilse!"

When she passed her hand over his head, she found that his hair had been cut very short; she knew that he was a bondman! in pity she embraced him; and she saw something else—a scarcely-healed scar on his right temple.

"How did you come by that?" she asked sympathetically.

"Herr Dietz von Stollberg wished to test the keenness of his new blade, and struck at me," the boy answered.

Then Princess Ilse wept, and began to call her father, but further than that she could not remember. She had never seen the boy since, had never asked after him.

Thus had the three years of her widowhood passed. The two young counts of Stollberg were her guests. They had long desired a certain piece of forest belonging to Ilsenburg, but Lady Ilse had always been opposed to selling it.

Lady Ilse would rather have remained away from the noise and clatter of her guests and their retainers, but she could not forego her duties as hostess. At times she felt very angry that they had brought a hunchback with them, dressed in the motley costume of the jester, with his stiff red hair standing up like bristles about his painted face; and it angered her more than ever to hear them bandying rough jokes with him at meal-time. Sometimes it seemed to the lady that his eyes were fixed appealingly upon her through the mask he always wore.

One day the younger guest threw a goblet at the hunchback, and cut his head.

Lady Ilse's tender heart was pained; she left the room and went into the courtyard where the hunchback was bathing his wound at the fountain.

"Can I help you?" she asked, in pitying tones.

"I thank you, my lady; but it is a mere surface wound—a scratch."

Lady Ilse stared hard at the man before her. He had removed his mask, and the water had washed the paint from his face, and under the red wig of hair, which was pushed back, she could see the dark, curling rings.

Then she asked him if he did not find Stollberg a hard master, to which he replied that he was no worse than others, and that if the Count would but permit him to go with the horses the jester would not complain.

Lady Ilse glanced swiftly at the hump and asked if he liked horses. The jester replied enthusiastically, whereupon she said he might try hers—they were wild enough for his taste. And she sent him to the keeper of the wardrobe for some less brilliant costume, while she obtained permission from his master for the jester to try her horses.

* * * * *

When Lady Ilse, after leaving Stollberg, went back into the courtyard, she was amazed at the appearance of Ottmar the jester. He had taken off the red wig, but most wonderful of all, with the fool's motley garb had disappeared the hump upon his back. Tall and straight and stately, he stood before his new mistress.

"Is it really you?" she asked almost incredulously. "If it is, you have wonderfully changed."

A smile flittered over his face.

"Bert, the court-fool, was taken ill just as we were about to set out on our journey; so the Court commanded that I should take his place, and as Nature had made me straight instead of crooked, the hump was devised."

At her bidding a servant brought the horses, and they rode away. Ottmar rode wonderfully well, and Lady Ilse admired his clever horsemanship; but, whenever he turned his face away from her, she could see the wound on his temple, and the old childish remembrance came back to her.

Suddenly she said to Ottmar: "We have ridden far enough to-day. To-morrow you shall come again, and, if you wish, you shall remain with me always. How would you like to remain, and have the charge of my stables?"

The strong man threw himself at her feet, and hid his face in her dress, his voice almost choked with sobs.

"Oh, sweet mistress, I will be yours for ever. I will serve you with heart and mind, with body and soul!"

The next day the negotiations were completed. The Princess Ilse gave her forest for Ottmar, and the lords of Stollberg departed, well pleased to have made a good bargain.

While they were riding one day, she induced him to speak of his life with the Stollbergs. He told of the misery he had endured, and she said that henceforth his life should be one of peace and contentment.

But, to her surprise, it did not grow better with

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Ottmar. Every day he looked more sorrowful, every day he grew thinner, and his face looked more haggard. At last the castellan spoke to Lady Ilse about it.

"There is something the matter with Ottmar, but none of us know how to help him."

The princess was deeply grieved, but, feeling that she dare not speak to Ottmar on the subject just now, she kept silent. One morning a maid came running in with the news that Ottmar was lying on the floor of his room unconscious, and that no one could revive him, though they had been trying for some time.

Lady Ilse went as if she had wings.

On the floor lay Ottmar, as pale and still as death. A strange feeling came over Lady Ilse, as her hand touched the scar on his brow. That strange, inexplicable thrill which always passed over her when she looked at the mark was intensified now that she touched it.

Under Lady Ilse's ministrations, more skilful than those of her servants, Ottmar revived at last. With a sigh he slowly opened his eyes, and looked wonderingly at Lady Ilse. She spoke to him soothingly, as one would speak to a weary child.

"You are ill, Ottmar, but I will nurse you well again. You are sad, but I will make you happy. Only you must not dare disobey my orders."

Ottmar shook his head.

"Let me die, my lady; it will be sweet to pass over to that place where all earthly things are at an end. Very sweet."

Lady Ilse contradicted him decidedly.

"It is cowardly to wish to die before your time has come. Besides, you do not know how much grief your death might cause others."

He laughed wildly.

"My death cause grief to others! To whom, I wonder? You could easily get someone else to ride your horses. Besides, my sufferings are unbearable."

"You speak wickedly, Ottmar; I thought that you were happy here with me."

"Only too happy. Every day I see more clearly how worthless I am. Since I have lived this pleasant life in your service, I have found out my true self, found out how full of vain wishes and foolish ambition I am. It is a wild illusion," he said, with great bitterness.

The princess heard him with a bleeding heart.

"What you say may be true," she said; "but have you never thought that your death might leave a gap that could never be filled in someone's life—in mine," very softly she added this. "You do not know, perhaps, what joy it gives me to see you mount the horses; you do not know what pleasure you have brought into my life."

This time Ottmar laughed with real pleasure. Something of Lady Ilse's cheerfulness communicated itself to him.

"Now, as soon as you can come to me, I have a little surprise. Something," she said, with a roguish smile, as she left him, "which I think will not be altogether distasteful to you."

Two days later. The time of violets and elder-blossoms had passed, but the roses were unfolding their petals in the golden sunshine. In obedience to the mistress, a servant had placed a couch in a pleasant spot of the garden for Ottmar, and half led, half carried, him to it.

As he reclined there, drinking in the rose-scented air, a feeling of contentment and peace stole over him; surely life was beautiful and well worth living! Then, like a blight, would come the old black shadow over his pleasant thoughts.

It was madness to allow such wild thoughts as those to pass through his brain. She a princess, he a bondman! That thought tortured him daily. Oh! it was wrong of her to be so kind to him! He hid his face in his hands.

Again he felt the touch of that soft, gentle hand, and this time he knew that it was real. He started up nervously; Lady Ilse stood before him.

"I wanted to see how you stood your first journey."

Ottmar flushed a glowing red; then turned pale as death.

"If I have frightened you, I am very sorry," said the lady.

Ottmar regained his self-possession.

"Pardon me, gracious lady," he said gravely, "that I have seemed lacking in respect, but weak limbs sometimes refuse service," and Ottmar rose slowly and with difficulty.

A sorrowful smile played round her lips. She looked steadily at him.

"Am I so small in your esteem?"

"No, my lady, you are gracious and great, and good and noble, while I am a bondman, the lowest of all mankind, and a miserable wretch not worthy to unfasten your shoe."

His tall figure swayed. Lady Ilse gently pushed him back on the couch.

"Ottmar, you are a self-tormenting fool. I will hear no more of this folly. See! I have brought you something which I think you will like," and she handed him a small roll of parchment, upon which was written in unmistakable characters Ottmar's freedom from the condition of bondage.

Ottmar stared hard at the letters on the written page. He had, while at Stollberg, secretly, and with great trouble, learnt the art of writing from the castle-chaplain; but now these characters seemed to dance before his eyes, and dazzle his sight. Free!

Lady Ilse had expected to witness an outburst of joy; she looked wonderingly at the one at her side, pale and speechless. At last she said, softly:

"Ottmar!"

The sound of her voice seemed to rouse him.

"My lady," he cried, "you have given me the best gift in the world, and I do not know how to use it!"

"Have patience, Ottmar; that will come to you later, when you are fully recovered."

"My lady, the chains have been so long upon me that the links have grown into the flesh; and, though you have filed off my fetters, I shall always bear the signs. I can never hold up my head as one whose shoulders have never felt the yoke of bondage."

Lady Ilse hastily interrupted him:

"Away with these unwholesome fantasies! I tell you again they are the result of your illness. When you are strong, we will consider your future; I will give you a portion of land wherever it shall please you to dwell, and you shall cultivate a freehold, and owe allegiance to no man save the emperor."

There was a strange look in Ottmar's eyes. He sank upon his knees.

"Take back your gift," he begged, holding up the roll of parchment; "let me be your most humble slave rather than send me away from you. I cannot live without you."

Calmly she raised him and made him rest on his couch again, while she seated herself on the stone bench at his side, and began to talk, quietly and naturally.

"What I have written must remain, Ottmar. I will

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invest you with the sword of knightly service, and, if it is not possible for you to be a knight of noble birth, you can be a true and noble knight in all other respects—one whose weapon shall be wielded in my service whenever there is need of a strong arm and a good sword at Ilsenberg."

Ottmar was deeply moved.

"You are so good, so good, gracious princess, that I shall never be able to thank you."

Then she reminded him of that day in their childhood, and, growing more confidential and seeking to cheer him, she told him that that was one of the happy remembrances of her life.

She spoke of her marriage, of her lonely widowhood, of her vow to her dead husband.

"I, too, am a bondman," she said sadly. "I cannot do—as—I would."

The man at her side stood up straight and tall, and looked down at her with a softened expression of protecting tenderness.

"I have been a fool, my lady. You were quite right, but it shall be so no longer. Never more will I hang my head in idle sadness; but with body and soul, heart and mind, I will devote my life to your service, and count myself happy to have been the means of recalling to you one happy remembrance of your childhood."

"That is right," she said, with a look of peace on her face. "Perhaps we shall both find our lives easier to bear in future, and, when you are able to ride so far, we will go together to Inselstein, and celebrate the remembrance of your childhood."

Weeks passed after that conversation. Ottmar wore his knightly armour as if he had never known any other condition of life.

Among all the knights there was none handsomer or more brave than Ottmar, and still they had not made the journey to the Inselstein. Ever since that morning the weather had seemed to set itself against them.

At last, however, they were able to start upon the excursion.

It was a beautiful midsummer morning, and the hearts of both were full to overflowing; perhaps that was why they rode so silently.

When they reached the point where the road began to ascend, Ottmar laid his hand on her bridle.

"Allow me to lead your horse, my lady," he said. "The earth has been washed out here by the heavy rains, making the road rough indeed, and it will weary you to have to draw so tight a rein."

She gave him her bridle; not that she needed his care, for my lady was a famous equestrienne, but, in some way that she could not explain, the sense of protection was pleasant. When they were upon level ground again, he did not give the bridle back.

The road narrowed suddenly, so that the princess and Ottmar were obliged to ride single file. Ottmar soon dismounted, and tied his horse to a tree. Princess Ilse followed his example.

"Let us walk the remainder of the way. It is only a short distance to Inselstein."

Side by side they went through the solitary green aisles of the forest.

Again words seemed to fail them. The twisted, moss-grown root of a great tree spread over their path in every direction, looking like a huge green snake. Ottmar sprang over it, and offered his hand to Lady Ilse. She gratefully accepted the proffered assistance, and did not relinquish her grasp. With hands closely clasped, Ottmar and the princess walked through the forest as happy as two children, as oblivious as if they were in a dream of enchantment.

Thus at last they reached the Inselstein. Lady Ilse sat down contentedly.

"This is the place," she said, but Ottmar threw himself at her feet, crying out:

"Oh, sweet Princess Ilse!"

Lady Ilse shrank back, terrified at the passionate outburst of feeling.

"Ottmar, be quiet," she said; "for my sake be quiet. You know that I cannot help you. You know as well as I that I am bound by an oath. I pray you, therefore, be calm." He wiped the tears from his eyes.

"I implore your pardon, my lady; I am grieved that I have frightened you. For your sake I will control my sorrow; but you must have a wreath, just as you had that day. I will gather the flowers." He hastened away towards the dangerous descent, where the beautiful mountain-blossoms grew. From this place the view on the right and left stretched far into the distance; but in front it was shut in by the Inselstein, which rose abruptly from the valley like a great watch-tower. At the foot of the Inselstein are the famous Ilsen Falls.

Lady Ilse knew that Ottmar was going upon a dangerous errand. She tried to recall him, but it was too late.

"Come back! Come back!" she cried, but the only answer was a mocking echo of her own words. In anguish Lady Ilse cowered upon the edge of the precipice. There she saw Ottmar clinging to a projecting root. He had gone a step too far; a misstep, a sudden loosening of the root, and—she grew faint to think of it! In dumb agony she prayed.

Ottmar's face was radiant. In his right hand he carried a great bunch of spring blossoms which he held up to her, smiling brightly, and saying:

"My dear lady——"

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, the root, unable to stand the heavy weight upon it, gave way, and without a sound, like the vanishing of a disembodied spirit, Ottmar sank into the depths below.

Lady Ilse looked upon him as one stunned by a heavy blow. Then, as if suddenly stung into action, she flew down a little hunter's path in the valley below. She had not known of this path before; she never knew how she got down into the valley. She no longer hoped to save him; she thought now only of seeing him once more—of catching his last glance.

In a few moments she reached the fallen man. He lay in a great lump of ferns. His upturned face was deadly pale, the moist earth pitifully absorbed the blood which oozed from the wound in the head.

Lady Ilse seized one of the limp-hanging hands, which still held the blossoms; they were cold. Trembling with fear, she bent over him. In agony she cried:

"Ottmar! Ottmar!"

He opened his eyes, and looked at her as if, with the intentness of his glance, he would hold her fast for ever.

"Farewell, my dear lady," he whispered softly.

She threw herself upon her knees beside him. "Death shall not separate us. Death has absolved my oath. You will never kiss me, Ottmar, but I will kiss you once—now while you can know it. Oh! Ottmar, my only love."

So, with Princess Ilse's kiss upon his lips, Ottmar passed peacefully over the dark river.

Lady Ilse lived for a long time in her castle, with her retinue of soldiers and servants; but no one of all those who knew her ever saw her smile again.

T. H. Jonmal.

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My 100 Marks.

THE incident I am about to relate occurred in Hamburg some years back.

I was a subaltern in the 35th Hussars at the time, and had been to Berlin on a visit to a cousin attached to the Embassy. Having a friend in Hamburg I broke my return journey to spend a few days in the old Hanseatic city.

I reached Hamburg from the Prussian capital about noon, and immediately drove to a quiet hotel in the Dammthor Strasse. After lunch I called on my friend, a wealthy grain-merchant, who lived in the best part of the town not far from where I had put up. We had a chat, and then accepting with pleasure an invitation to dine with him that same evening, I bade him good-bye for the time being, and returned to my hotel to write some letters.

I had just finished them and gone up to my room to dress, when a waiter knocked at my door, and, with a Continental disregard for ceremony, ushered a man in.

My visitor, whom I was not unnaturally inclined to look upon more in the light of an intruder than a caller, was a typical middle-class German, except that he was very slightly built, and his face was pale and emaciated.

He remained silent until the waiter had left, and then asked in broken English, with a bow:

"Is it *der Herr Capitain*——?" I informed him I was that person, in German, in which language he put his second question.

"May I lock the door so that we are not disturbed, sir?"

"When I know your name and business I shall be in a better position to consider your request," I answered, wondering what on earth the fellow wanted.

First glancing nervously behind him, he came close to me and, talking fast in Low German, which I had difficulty in following, he made a long, rambling statement that, however, so far interested me as to hold my attention.

What the man told me might be true or false, probability pointed to the latter, but in either case it was a startling story. To be brief, it was to the following effect:

He and another had deserted from the navy on account of some financial affair.

His companion then declared he had discovered a means of getting hold of the war-office plans of Kiel harbour, and had induced my informer to assist in the theft by protesting that they could easily get out of the country and would make their fortunes by the sale of the documents.

They successfully accomplished the first and all-important step in their nefarious scheme, but the instigator of the affair had then tried to leave his accomplice to pay the piper by getting away without him. My informant had, however, discovered and frustrated this part of the scoundrel's programme; himself obtaining possession of the papers, and allowing his fellow-thief to abscond with dummies—if he could—but he had been already arrested, and they were now on the track of the second deserter.

When he had finished and I had questioned him on two or three points I did not understand, he turned round and then looked from me to the door. I nodded. Noiselessly turning the key, he quickly unbuttoned his coat and waistcoat, and taking a package done up in black linen from an inner pocket, held it towards me.

"They are yours, sir, for a hundred marks. A steamer leaves for London to-night, and if I can get a passage by her I am safe, but I am penniless," he said in a gruff whisper.

Whatever atom of belief I might have had in his tale vanished when he made this proposition. It was too suggestive of the ordinary swindler. However, thinking the yarn, if it proved to be nothing else, cheap at the price, I took five twenty mark notes out of my pocket and handed them to him in exchange for his papers. The fellow's face beamed, he made no attempt to hide his delight, but grasping the money he said the single word "Thanks," unfastened the door and rushed out. As I heard him taking the stairs three steps at a time I instantly regretted my bargain, but if I did not want to keep my friend waiting I must hurry, so I placed the package unopened in my trunk and proceeded to change my clothes.

After an enjoyable evening with the grain merchant, for my friend was an excellent host, I started to return to my hotel on foot.

About half-past eleven I found myself in the principal thoroughfare, the Neuerwall, where I turned into one of the big cafés to smoke a final cigar. The place was crowded with people from the Opera and the different concert halls in the vicinity, and I had difficulty in finding a seat. I eventually made for a vacant chair at a table adjoining one where a party of officers were seated. I gave my order, and amused myself watching the various types around me.

Seeing a cover containing a copy of the English *Graphic* in front of me, I picked it up, and was looking

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through the paper, when an officer stalked up to the table behind me and spoke to one of the party. They were talking quickly in a subdued tone, and I did not pay any attention to them until the two words frequently repeated caught my ear. "Kiel-plans." This aroused my curiosity. I listened. Yes, their discussion evidently had some connection with my acquisition which I had nearly forgotten till this moment. I heard no more, for the two officers left the café together, but I had learnt enough. My visitor had after all, then been neither swindler nor madman. I did not wait to consider the matter further; but, paying the waiter, walked out and at once returned to the hotel.

The drowsy porter mechanically lit and handed me a candle and I hurried upstairs. Once inside my room I stood the candlestick on the dressing-table, and first locking the door, opened my trunk in search of the black linen package. But I turned the contents upside down in vain, for the thing I sought had vanished as completely as if it had never been there. I turned to examine my other impedimenta, but it was nowhere to be found. It was evident that it had been stolen, but how, was a mystery, for the lock of the trunk was uninjured. While I was puzzling my sleepy brains with this conundrum, someone rapped at the door, I opened it and found the porter utside with a note. It was left early in the evening, he explained, but he had overlooked it when I came in.

Taking the letter, I re-fastened the door. The envelope contained only a sheet of ordinary foreign note-paper ruled in squares. The communication had neither date nor signature. It consisted of the following words written in a small copper-plate hand:

"Lieutenant Matthew is warned against making any inquiries respecting a theft that may have occurred in his room this evening. He will find on examination that none of his property has been touched."

The letter lies before me as I write; it is all I have to show for my hundred marks.

It is never any use crying over spilt milk, but I sometimes wonder what would have been the result if I had instantly left for England with the documents. I have heard, however, that the German pol ce system is far reaching.

GEOFFREY RHODES.

BOAT RACE COMPETITION.

ON Saturday, March 25th, the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race will take place. There is every reason to believe that the contest will be an exciting one, and so that our readers may take additional interest in the National event we offer a Prize of £5 to the sender of the coupon, printed below, giving most nearly correct: (1) The Winning Boat; (2) the distance separating the two boats at the finish; (3) the time taken by the winning boat in the race. The third condition will only be used to decide the actual winner of the prize in the event of more than one giving equally correct answers to the other two questions. Prizes divided in the event of a tie between competitors. The Judges' decision of the race will be our standard for making the award.

Having filled up the coupon to your thinking, sign your name and address in the space provided on the left, and get two friends to sign their names and addresses on the right. In the event of your winning the prize they will each receive £1. Competitors may send in any number of attempts, all of which may be signed by the same witnesses.

Up to the present time fifty-five races have been rowed. Oxford have won thirty-two and Cambridge twenty-two races, the 1877 contest being a dead heat. Oxford have won the races for the past nine years, their times being from a minimum of 18min. 47sec. to a maximum of 22min. 15sec., and their wins during that time from half-a-length to thirteen lengths.

All envelopes containing coupons should be addressed: "BOAT RACE COMPETITION," *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and should reach us not later than the first post, Friday, March 24th. Any envelopes bearing a later postmark than March 23rd will be disqualified.

The Competition is run in conjunction with *PASTIMES*.

"SHORT STORIES" BOAT RACE COMPETITION COUPON.

TIME OF WINNING BOAT:

Winning Boat: .....

Min. ——— Sec.

Distance Won by: .....

Competitor: .....

Witnesses: .....

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

XV.—DIFFICULTIES OF A WITNESS.

"You must get up pretty early in the morning, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, "because I'm going to be a witness in court."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Mrs. Timmins; "what have you been doing?"

"What d'ye s'pose I've been doing? I've heard some things in a law case, and I've got to swear to them. You can't have a law case without witnesses, and I've got to be one to-morrow; so you bustle up in the morning and get my breakfast."

"They can't do anything to you, can they?" inquired Mrs. Timmins nervously.

"If I'm not there in time they can send me to gaol," responded Mr. Timmins ominously, "and you'd better get me ready in time if you don't want to lose me;" and Mr. Timmins flopped into bed and went to sleep.

Mrs. Timmins turned the clock ahead two hours, and sat down to speculate on the chances of waking up at the proper moment. At first she determined to stay up all night, but she began to get sleepy, and, reflecting that if she fixed her mind on the hour she wanted to rise she'd be sure to wake up, she went to bed and to sleep simultaneously.

At half-past four she awoke with a terrible start.

"Wake up, my dear!" she exclaimed to her husband. "You've got to go a-witnessing in a case this morning. Hurry up, or they'll put you in gaol."

"Wah!" rejoined Mr. Timmins. "What did the deed get mixed there with—proof—ah!" and Mr. Timmins was sound asleep again.

"You must get up and go to court," said Mrs. Timmins, nudging him firmly. "You know something about a law case, and you must wake up."

"What's the matter?" propounded Mr. Timmins, sitting up and glaring round him. "What day of the month is this? I haven't slept a wink," and Mr. Timmins fell back on his pillow.

"You know you must go to the case," continued Mrs. Timmins. "You've been appointed a witness, and you must go and swear about it. Wake up, or they will arrest you."

"What case?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Who's arrested? Can't you let a man alone just as he is getting in a doze? What's the matter with you?"

"You wanted to get up early about some court. Come, get up, now, or they'll send you to gaol," and Mrs. Timmins got up and lighted the gas.

"Who's going to court?" asked Mr. Timmins sitting up in bed. "Where is the court? D'yer think any court wants me at five o'clock in the morning?"

"It's about a law case," said Mrs. Timmins cheerfully. "You know you are a witness. To think that I should live to be the wife of a witness!" said Mrs. Timmins, firmly impressed that it was something in the nature of a foreign mission, gazing admiringly upon her husband.

"Hang the law case!" howled Mr. Timmins, now thoroughly riled. "D'ye think a law case goes prowling round all night like a policeman? Have you got an idea that a judge is going to strap the court-house on his back, and fetch it up here in the dead of night to try a law case?"

"But you said you wanted to get up early," resumed Mrs. Timmins, "and it's pretty early now."

"D'ye s'pose I wanted to get up at midnight? P'rhaps you were afraid if I didn't start early I wouldn't get a seat. The court doesn't meet till ten o'clock, and here you wake me up at four! What do you suppose a witness is, anyhow?" shouted Mr. Timmins, getting wilder and wilder. "D'ye know what a court is?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Timmins. "A court is where they hang people. Mrs. Meirhoff——"

"That's it! You've got it!" sputtered Mr. Timmins. "With that information, all you want is a wig and an adjournment to be a lawyer. If I had your intelligence and a bald head I'd hire out for a job at board wages. I tell ye a court is where they try cases about lands and licking people, and—and—and divorce cases. Yes, indeed," continued Mr. Timmins solemnly, "they try divorce cases about women waking their husbands up in the dead of night."

"What kind of law case are you going to witness?" inquired Mrs. Timmins.

"A daylight case! You understand that? At ten o'clock, and not five. Get that into your head. Think you can remember ten o'clock? If you can't, can you remember eleven or noon?"

"Do they have cases every hour?" queried Mrs. Timmins.

"Of course they do. They leave every fifteen minutes, like a Saturday train, and if I can't catch one case, I'll witness in another. Got it now? Only they don't run so often from midnight to six. Do you begin to see into it?"

"I think I do," said Mrs. Timmins ruminating. "I was thinking that if one started about three o'clock I'd go and witness with you."

"Oh! you'd make a witness!" proclaimed Mr. Timmins. "With your capacity for observation and ability to recollect, you'd only want to appear twice to absorb the whole witness business," and with this reflection Mr. Timmins went back to his slumbers.

At ten o'clock sharp his wife called him and notified him of the hour.

"How'm I going to get there in time? Why didn't you call me before? D'you want me sent to prison for contempt? You want to get rid of me, don't you?" and Mr. Timmins darted into his clothes.

"Don't you want some breakfast, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Timmins tenderly.

"No, I don't want any breakfast!" he shouted. "Didn't I tell ye I was a witness at ten, and now it's half-past? D'you think a man is appointed a witness during good behaviour? S'pose I hold the office till my successor is appointed?" and Mr. Timmins plunged downstairs and out of the house.

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BOOK V.—CONCERNING A SOJOURN - - AMONGST THE DAJIANS.

CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING ALEXANDER.

CHAPTER I.

How Sandy Carmichael stirred up the Ermans: how he led them to victory: how the Dajian canoes went away: and how the Ermans did homage to their King Alexander.

To retrace our steps a little.

The last we saw of Sandy Carmichael was in the chief sorcerer's cave. When his two unfortunate companions awoke to find themselves in Dajian clutches, they noticed that Sandy was not in sight, and hoped that by some means or other he had managed to escape; though to what device he owed his safety, they were unable to discover.

The facts of the matter, which are simple, may be briefly stated thus. Sandy was awakened from his sleep by the groanings of the fat little assistant sorcerer. He was desperately tired still, but his medical instinct prevailed, and he got up to inspect his patient. The poor fellow's wound was much inflamed, and he was suffering agonies from it. A fresh cool compress would be the only way of alleviating the pain in any appreciable degree; and so Sandy went away down to the woodland to gather material for this, and also to find the wherewith to make some sharp cooling drink which would slacken the fierce thirst which the fever had engendered.

Suitable leaves for the compress came to his hand without much trouble; but, luckily for him, the suitable herbs, from which to decoct the beverage he wished to administer internally, were not to be seen anywhere.

He wandered on through the leafy aisles, searching on every side without the smallest success. A less determined character would have resigned the task in despair; but although Sandy was indebted to the little assistant sorcerer for nothing whatever—had indeed a grudge against him if he chose to remember it—still his medical instincts had bidden him attempt the cure, and his spirit of perseverance refused to let him neglect any item which would forward it.

So Sandy Carmichael strode along, dodging under the lianes, and sweeping the trailing orchids aside from his path, scanning each side in turn for the plants he wanted, and at last had his doggedness rewarded by the sight of a tidy clump of the long-wished-for herb.

He gathered a sufficiency, and then turning, began smartly to retrace his steps.

The next stage of the story will be anticipated, and therefore need not be told in detail.

Emerging from the wood, he saw that Ebry had turned traitor, and that both his European comrades were in the hands of Dajians.

To rescue them single-handed was impossible. To stay where he was meant sharing their fate. So he slipped back to cover till the cortége had passed by, and then, returning into the open once more, he set off with all the speed he could muster towards the point where he believed King Oleron's head-quarters would be.

His idea of the locality were somewhat vague, and as the crest-fallen monarch was keeping up no particular state, it was impossible to tell when he was getting into his neighbourhood. So, much time was spent in profitless search. But at last he came across his majesty seated under the shade of a scarlet-flowered hibiscus bush, making a meal from a calabash of sweet potatoes.

In as few words as possible Sandy told him what had happened, dwelling strongly on the point that the capture was already some hours old, and that not another instant of time ought to be lost.

The old king looked at him sorrowfully, hopelessly.

"What can I do?" he moaned. "These two and you were the mainstay of our battle. Even with all of you, my people were broken, dispirited, cowed. And now that two are gone, what can they do? Nothing. My power over them is waning. They think me old, feeble, useless. They forget all that I have done for them during long years past, in a few short days of ill success."

"Will you call the men together?" Sandy demanded.

"To what end?" asked the King. "That I may again expose myself to their murmurings and revilings?"

"No. To give me an opportunity of goading them into a sense of their duty to themselves."

The answer was a bold one, but the old King, reading in Sandy Carmichael's set face that self-confidence that was lacking in himself, agreed to his request. His men were all within a short radius, encamped without order, hidden about through the forest without organisation. Messengers were sent amongst them, and they obeyed the summons, more out of curiosity than obedience. Word had gone round that it was the youngest of the three white men who had instigated the gathering.

They came trooping up from their forest retreats like so many rabbits coming out on a quiet moonlight night, and assembled in a small open glade. No order or formation was attempted. The only thing uniform was the faces, and they were all sullen and scowling.

It was rather an ordeal for a youngster to address such an assembly, and Sandy Carmichael was a bit nervous at first;

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but he warmed up as he spoke of the defence of the Ledge, grew more excited when he told how part of the relieving party was captured through the despicable treachery of the chief sorcerer, and burst into real eloquence when he called on all present to fall upon the besiegers, and rescue their countrymen and his. He mentioned nothing about a possible repulse. He spoke of victory as a foregone conclusion, and he took it for granted that all were ready for the enterprise.

The mob of men were stirred by his harangue, and old Maantee gave first voice to the answer. The others, fired by enthusiasm, declared that they would fight to the last gasp.

Sandy had studied the character of these people he had to deal with. They were fickle, changeable, easily influenced. Ten minutes ago they had quite intended to refuse thrusting themselves into danger; now they were keen for it; and if their ardour were allowed but a little time to cool, they would soon become as timorous as ever again.

So he struck while the iron was hot, and placed himself at their head.

The force sped down Maantee's valley at a rapid pace, and the two bodies of Dajians who were investing the Ledge saw them coming. The invaders drew together for mutual support, and coming incautiously within range of Mytto's artillery were treated to a sharp fire which bowled over half-a-dozen of them.

They drew off out of shot in a big hurry, every man running for all he was worth, and massed themselves in a disorderly squad. The Ermans were actually coming to attack them unprovoked! The timid Ermans, who looked on from the mountain when their homes were destroyed in the valleys below, and so seldom attempted reprisals! There was no nervousness about them now. They were coming on as bold as brass, and the Dajians did not like the look of matters at all.

Being unimpeded by any scientific formation, the foremost men kept edging away to the rear, and those who they left to bear the brunt of the attack, were not slow to follow the example set them in their turn. So that when the Ermans, encouraged by these signs of demoralisation, did come into actual collision with their enemy, the latter were already in pretty rapid retreat. In fact, the momentum of the whole, at the second of impact, was entirely in one direction.

The result was obvious.

The Dajians ran, and the Ermans, for once in their lives brimful of fight, followed at their heels, and did a considerable amount of damage.

But the inhabitants of the island could not be persuaded to press their advantage thoroughly home. The retreating foe had not suffered its rear to be harassed impassively, and several doughty Ermans bit the turf in their valiant attempts to slay their former persecutors. So that when the Dajians having reached the coast, and being unable to move further with any degree of comfort till the canoes were launched, made a decided stand, Sandy could not move his forces, either by precept or example, to compel the invaders to do so against their will.

So, contenting himself with hurrying up the embarkation, as much as his unwilling resources would permit of, he waited till all that were in a condition to get there were out of harm's way on the lagoon; and then, leaving a body of men under Maantee to resist any attempt at another landing, he went off with Mytto and the rest southward down the coast to the next valley.

He had hoped to find his white comrades prisoners in the hands of the men who were besieging the Ledge, but gathering now that there was another band beyond him, he moved towards it with all the pace he could muster. As it happened the two prisoners were there, but, as we have seen, he was too late to rescue them. The messenger who carried the news of defeat was before him, and the canoes were in the water before he could get near enough to bring their crews into action.

So there was nothing for it but to turn round again, and rejoin his main body.

As they marched back along the coast, they saw all the canoes of the enemy putting off and making for the entrances of the reef. There was no doubt of it that the invaders had taken themselves off *en masse*, and Sandy felt that all chance of succouring his two old comrades had vanished. True they might be killed already; but even if they had escaped so far, he felt sure that they were doomed all the same. About their fate in cannibal Daji there could be no doubt. He felt himself powerless to attempt their rescue there.

Very sick at heart, poor Sandy sat down on a tussock of sea grass, and watched the retreating craft passing out through the openings of the reef into the broad ocean beyond. They were bearing with them the only ties that bound him to the hemisphere of his birth; two true comrades whom he had—so he told himself—failed in the hour of their need.

He almost envied their lot. Henceforward what had he to look for? Taking advantage of the mood of the islanders, he had rendered them a service that day. He had made them feel that they were men once more, and had led them in a battle which drove the invader from their soil. But then they were fickle—savagely fickle. Oleron had lost his authority of years, simply through the defeats of a few weeks. Though, come to think of it, that was greatly King Oleron's own fault for not having trained his subjects to arms in time of peace. But notwithstanding that, the Ermans were an ungrateful race, Sandy told himself, and his lot amongst them would be an unenviable one. His medical skill might avail something, but if a patient died under his hand, he might well be murdered there and then.

He was musing on in this bitter strain, when a huge band of clamouring natives approached him with the chief Maantee, and Mytto his son at their head.

Their rejoicings were natural enough, Sandy thought; and though he too was glad for their sake that the Dajians were gone and the island was their own again, he had no heart to join in any outburst of barbaric thanksgiving. So he got up, and turned to plunge into the bushes, hoping to find a place where he could pour out his grief in solitude; but he was stopped before he had taken a single stride.

With one mighty cry, the vast assembly uttered his name.

He turned again and faced them. With the exception of the chiefs, all sank down on the ground, and pressed their heads on the sand. The chiefs advanced. Maantee was bearing a scarlet-tappa robe—the only piece of scarlet cloth on Erma—the insignia of royalty.

"Oleron is dead," the chief said. "He died as a king should; fighting the enemies of his island. So it devolved upon the whole people to elect a successor to him. All spoke, yet there was but a single voice. They cried for him who had driven the Dajians to their canoes. 'None other,' said all, 'shall reign over us.' Being the oldest of his chiefs, the honour devolves upon me to invest our new king with his kingly robe.

"Ermans, see! The king is clad with his scarlet. Long may he wear it. Highly may he honour it. Save the king!"

"Save the king!" shouted the people of Erma, and they bowed their heads once more in token of homage and allegiance.

And so began the reign of King Alexander.

CHAPTER II.

How Sneyd and O'Neill vowed allegiance to King Alexander: how Norah was made Mrs. O'Neill: how a plan was schemed for the defence of the island: and how the same was carried into effect.

Sneyd and O'Neill were lying in a couple of grass hammocks under the verandah of King Alexander's palace. They were both very much sun-darkened, and had both lost some flesh, but otherwise they were little the worse for their late rough experiences. The nervous strain had bee-

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great at the time; but once relieved, they were disposed to forget it in the comforts of the present.

"That's a great cloak entoirely," O'Neill was saying as he examined the scarlet robe of royalty with quizzical glance. "Ye'll be dispensing wid breeches now, I suppose, afther the fashion adopted by all yer loyal subjects?"

King Alexander turned with a comical look of despair to Sneyd. "Do make that miserable man let me have a little peace," he implored. "He's done nothing but chaff me about my new accoutrements ever since he came back."

"'Uneasy lies the man who wears the scarlet robe,' your poor old predecessor used to say, Sandy, in that sentenious way of his. By the way, don't you think it would be more dignified if you made the Ermans lengthen out your name to Alexander?"

"They've always heard you call me Sandy, and so they call me Sandy too."

"They do do that same," chuckled the Irishman, "an' wid as much aisy familiarity as though ye was own brother to aich of them. Yer honour should kape up more state. Start a coach-an'-six; drop pipes an' take to cigars; never lave the house widout a smart burnished block-tin crown perched jauntily at the side of yer sconce; an' always march at the tail of a brass band."

"The idea is distinctly good," said Sneyd, "only unfortunately the resources of the kingdom are limited. We might indeed contrive to build the coach, but I'm afraid we should have to fall back on his majesty's loyal subjects for motive power. We'll order a crown of best silver-gilt the next time we send to Birmingham, of course, but in the meantime I'm afraid his majesty will have to content himself with the mid section a big cocoanut, set round with oyster shells. That may not be quite in accordance with western orthodoxy, but it will be neat and not gaudy; and, if I may put it so, barbarically appropriate. Brazen instruments too are unfortunately lacking, but O'Neill has a musical ear, and I am sure that if he was made Bandmaster-General, he would get together an orchestra of tom-toms and conch-shells that would beat any combination in Europe—as regards volume of sound, at any rate."

"Thanks for the suggestions," replied the king. "I'll think 'em over."

"Might I venture to inquire," his other tormentor went on, "av yer honour has thought of bucklin' on a royal consort? There's hapes o' likely girls about the island that only want to be winked at, to wink back again. Sure there isn't an unmarried woman about the place that wouldn't be proud of throwin' sheep's eyes at a handsome young man like yerself. Faith, king dear, wid that sproutin' beard ye're just irresistible. Ye should think about marryin'."

"I have thought about it," rejoined King Alexander.

"Well?"

"And have decided to go no further than thinking just at present," continued his majesty. "I'm going to wait and see how your venture turns out first, O'Neill, before I make up my mind to follow your example. But," he continued, with graceful compliment, "I'm afraid even that won't make me reconciled to marriage. If there were another Norah on the island, I might try to win her; but there isn't, and there's not likely to be."

"Sandy," exclaimed the Irishman, "you're as good-hearted a bhoy as ever stepped, an' it's meself that's sorry for tazin yez. Norah is what ye say. She's not one in ten thousand; she's one in ten generations."

So his majesty earned a little rest, and the conversation for a while lost its personal tinge; but the opportunity for banter was too good to be resisted, and in less than ten minutes the pair of them were chaffing him as hard as ever again.

The had started talking about the house—the royal palace; I beg its pardon—and Sandy—bother! I mean his majesty the King—had remarked, "Oleron's shanty was burnt to the ground, so I built this."

"Had it built, you mane," suggested O'Neill.

"Had it built, then, if that pleases you better. I didn't want to brag. But all the same, I did most of the work myself."

The Irishman held up his hands in mock horror.

"Just hear yez that now! A king, a rale live king, and actually buildin' his own palace wid his own royal fists! Was iver the like done before?"

"I'm afraid," said Sneyd, "he's doing but small credit to our careful bringing up. As one of your majesty's early preceptors, I crave leave to say that I am shocked."

"Look here, you two," exclaimed the goaded monarch, "I'm going to appoint a new public official—a court executioner. And then I'll have you both hanged."

"Just as an example to ourselves," retorted the irrepressible Irishman, "so that we shall learn better manners for the future."

"Let us be serious for a minute. You know the islanders made me their chief ruler in a moment of enthusiasm. Perhaps I had stirred them up to save themselves, but my wish was more for your welfare than for theirs. In that last battle, Oleron fell fighting. He had left no son. A successor was needed. Failing any one else, they pitched upon me, being moved to that course by an access of momentary gratitude. Even then I was not fitted for the position. Now that you have returned, I feel my inefficiency even more acutely. You are both my seniors, and you both have more worldly knowledge than I upon almost every point. So I shall resign in favour of one or other of you, and——"

"Hould on a minute," interrupted O'Neill. "I flatly decline to enter a thrade I'm in no manner of way fitted for. Me forefathers was kings somewhere or other in Ulster. But that's a great long time ago now, an' the knack of rulin' has passed clane out of the family."

"And I too," said Sneyd, "most distinctly refuse to rob you of your well-earned honours. They've got the right man in the right place. Had we been on the ground, they'd have chosen you, Sandy, just the same. You're the youngest, certainly; but you've got the best headpiece of the lot of us, and you've mastered the ways of these islanders most thoroughly. That's a talent that's born in one, and not learnt afterwards. O'Neill and I might strive as much as we liked, and still never acquire it. You are the king, and long may you reign. We two will aid you by every means in our power. We are both entirely at your service. But you may rest quite assured that we shall never either seek or consent to supplant you."

Sandy tried to express his thanks for this generous behaviour, but neither of them would hear another word. This was rather rude, perhaps, and hardly the sort of behaviour a sovereign ought to expect from a pair of subjects who had so recently expressed their complete allegiance to him; but the case was a peculiar one, and so must be judged from it own standpoint.

* * * * *

Two days after this interview a wedding took place, which made Norah, daughter of Maantee, into Mrs. Murtagh O'Neill. The ceremony was a peculiar one, and will perhaps bear a brief description.

Early in the morning bride and bridegroom took to the woods unattended, and played at a game of conventional hide-and-seek. By this I mean that the one did not go out of her way to find an undiscoverable retreat, and the other did not distress himself with arduous search. In fact, to put it more plainly, each chose a pleasant secluded spot and sat down and waited patiently. The day wore through, darkness fell and a full moon rose rich and red above the waving tree tops. Then the two arose, and the bridegroom found his bride by pre-arranged accident (if such a term may be used) in a little glade, surrounded and partly overarched by sweet-smelling orange trees. He seized her in his arms, and announced his capture with a glad shout.

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From their hiding-places behind the orchid-hung walls of the inclosure, the bidden guests burst forth; the women garlanded with wreaths of orange-blossom, and having live yellow-glowing fire-flies fastened in their hair; the men in their gala attire of bright-coloured *tappa* cloth. They all clustered round the happy couple, laughing and singing and each bearing some present. The women presented their offerings to the bridegroom, the men gave theirs to the bride; and by accepting the gifts, the two formally acknowledged themselves to be man and wife.

A feast followed, composed of fruit and palm wine, and then there was a dance of the unmarried girls, whose lithe forms, flitting here and there in the soft moonlight, gave one the idea of so many fairies disporting themselves in their own domain, for the spot was one of surpassing loveliness, and the heavily-scented air seemed as though it could only belong to the realm of fairyland.

The dance concluded, the assembled guests escorted the newly-married pair to the threshold of their bungalow, and there left them.

The ceremony was a simple one, but according to Erman custom it was binding, and either of the couple who deserted the other would be viewed as a pariah by all the islanders, whatever might be the reason alleged for the act.

* * * * *

It was not very long after this that Sneyd and O'Neill were sitting in King Alexander's palace, discussing with that youthful monarch the various items of his future policy. Though nominally autocratic, he had tactfully formed them into a sort of privy council, and usually gave way if their united opinion went against his own. And in truth they were as good a couple of advisers as he could have procured. O'Neill, despite his love of fun, his fondness for quips and jokes, and his queer knack of making a bull even of the simplest sentence, was shrewd and keensighted, and generally knew the feelings of the natives on any point, through the medium of his wife. Besides, although thoroughly illiterate, he had been a rolling stone almost all his life, and had contrived to pick up a vast and varied amount of information which was more or less useful. Sneyd was more staid by nature, and generally thought out his opinions before he uttered them. He had received a good preliminary education from a private tutor, and at Cambridge; and since the day when he joined the Prince's army near Manchester, he had had a good many other things instilled into him which the pedantic dominies of his earlier days being ignorant of themselves, had omitted to teach.

So that, although the two were quite ordinary men, Sandy might very well have been saddled with a worse couple.

They were discussing, as I have said, on this special day a question of future policy. They were trying to hit upon the best means of preventing a recurrence of those scenes which had devastated the island but a few short months before; how, in fact, to render themselves safe from foreign invasion in the future. Sneyd was in favour of a standing army, or a periodically trained militia that could be placed on a war-footing at a very short notice. It would be difficult to raise this, as professional soldiering was in none of the Erman traditions; but the ex-cornet held that his scheme was a feasible one, and offered himself to drill every male in the island capable of carrying arms. O'Neill pinned his faith on an efficient navy. With a fleet of properly-built canoes under his command, manned with properly-trained crews, he would guarantee to deter any hostile flotilla from landing on the shores of Erma; and with the sea as a battle-field they would suffer far less than they would by letting an enemy land, and operating against him on dry ground.

Both held stoutly to their theories, and the three argued each out in turn, threshing out thoroughly every point that could be brought to bear, *pro* or *con*. At last when disfavour had been conclusively shown for both schemes, Sneyd said:

"Look here, Sandy, suppose we learn your idea on the subject. I'm beginning to have a notion that you've got the whole thing planned out in your head long enough ago, and you only just wanted to hear what we had got to say on the subject, merely to show you were a lot cleverer than either of us."

Sandy's face relaxed into one of its rare smiles. "I'm not so conceited as that," he said, "but I will confess to having a plan. It embraces both of yours, but is, I think, simpler than either."

"Well, that's modest, at any rate," laughed O'Neill. "Come, out with it."

"Don't be in too great a hurry. I want you to come with me on the lagoon." He whistled, and a man appeared. "Tell off a canoe's crew to meet us down at the beach, Trono."

The man departed on his errand, and they sauntered leisurely down to the shore. When they got there they found the canoe had been run down, and was lying alongside a natural jetty of coral. They stepped on board, the craft was shoved off, and the paddles dipped in perfect unison, shooting her swiftly over the placid surface of the sea lake.

Down through the clear water beneath them were coral plants of every hue and shape imaginable, with the lovely tropical sea-herbage sprouting up between them. But to the wonders and beauties of this marine garden, no one in the canoe paid any attention. The paddlers had been born and had lived all their lives within reach of them, and so viewed their forms and colours with unappreciative eye. And the three Europeans had something else wherewith to occupy their attention. They were looking at the barrier reef, black, grim, and forbidding, deluged every half minute with a shrieking avalanche of creamy foam.

"That," Sandy said, "is what I take to be our chief bulwark. There has not been built a craft in the two hemispheres which could be sent across that barrier, and still be able to float on this hither side."

"But," suggested Sneyd, seeing that he waited for comment, "there are openings through the reef where a clever boatman can take his vessel through safely enough, if he bides his time and waits for the right moment."

"I know it. There are three openings; one on the other side of the island and two here. We are heading to one of them now. There is beside it, if you'll notice, a small low-lying islet. It's just above the level of the lagoon, and so close to the reef that its surface is always sown with spume flakes. Now my proposition is to build a strong fort on this of squared blocks cemented together with mortar, and arm it with something the same sort of artillery as that we used on the Ledge, only of course our engines being constructed at leisure, could be far from perfect. That would command this entrance, and any small craft which tried to pass through against our will would most infallibly be sunk. And as for the other two openings in the reef, I should raft off stones and try to block them so that the coral insects have a chance to work. They will soon close the breach if only the direct sweep of the sea is stopped for awhile."

"Be the powers," exclaimed the Irishman, "it's the right pig's ear we've got hold of this time. An' the other two schemes are worked into boot, for there'll be soldiers wanted to man the fort, an' sailors to man a small fleet who'll kape up the shore connection."

"And what's another thing," added Sneyd, "a very small force will suffice to keep the whole island in safety, when once the defences are made. If every man in the community does a fortnight's service in the year, that is all that will be required of him. Sandy, I congratulate you. You've got an older head on your shoulders than your years would warrant. By the way, how old are you? We ought to know, as they'll be wanting the precise figure one of them fine days for the Gotha Almanac."

"I don't know my exact age. But I should think I was about sixteen or seventeen when you found me in Duncan

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Carmichael's little cutter. We have gone through a good deal since that."

"We have, but sticking to the point at issue, how long were you with Duncan Carmichael?"

"Twelve years, I think; or was it thirteen? I forget exactly. There was so little to help recollect how time passed."

"And before then—do you recollect nothing? We have never had the subject up before, which is an odd thing, considering how long we've been together."

"Yes," replied Sandy meditatively; "I do remember a home somewhere—a small house, with a man who must have been my father. I don't recollect anybody who could have been my mother; but there was an old woman who used to look after me, called Bridget. She had no teeth, and her nose nearly touched her chin. My father was a thin little man, who always seemed worried about something or other. One day Bridget told me we were going away. She dressed me, and we journeyed some distance by coach; stayed the night at a strange house; and then journeyed on again to a big town. We slept another night there, and went on board a ship which sailed early next morning. From what I've learnt afterwards she was a big merchantman. She called at Belfast Lough for more passengers, and then headed round the north of Ireland. The officer in command must have been drunk, for he blundered her on to Innistrahul* just after dusk. There was a heavy sea running, and the vessel began to go to pieces immediately. Duncan Carmichael, who was in the Sound, saw the wreckage next morning, and set to work gleaning what he could do. Amongst other things he came across me. I was lashed to a hen-coop, and was pretty nearly dead with exposure. However, I suppose he thought I should be of some use to him, and so took the trouble to wrap me up, and stow me down in the forepeak. He left me ashore when he got back, but after a couple of years he took me to sea again, and I was kept with the cutter till you came."

"That's a pretty baldish tale," said Sneyd. "Can't you remember any more about your people than that?"

"I've tried many and many a time of late, but nothing more will come back to me. I know it is very incomplete. If I were back in the world again, it would be hopeless to attempt a search for any of my relatives who might be alive. So you see that with regard to kith and kin over there, I have made up my mind that I must always be without. But for that, I don't think I should be resigned to staying here; but as it is, I shall be quite content to end my days on Erma."

* * * * *

The work of making the reef into a natural line of defence was put in hand without further delay. It appeared a somewhat colossal undertaking, and though it did turn out to be large, still many and willing hands made the work light. The islanders were so thoroughly stirred to the necessity of avoiding another invasion, if the means lay in their power, that they gave their labour willingly to the public cause. Great masses of coral rock were rafted out and dropped in the two doomed openings. The ravenous sea swept away load after load, but the supply never faltered, and in time the channels were completely obstructed.

Meanwhile other blocks had been ferried across to the islet, where they were built into shape, and cemented with a mortar made from burnt coral† mixed with sand and water.

The fort was a plain square building, with walls twenty feet high rising sheer out of the water. There was one small doorway in the middle of the land side; and adequately defended and provisioned, it was absolutely impregnable to native attack. The place was of immense strength, for the walls were ten feet thick, and they were further supported by a platform which stretched across four feet from the top, and rested upon heavy groined arches below. Two spiral stairways led to this, and on it were placed ballistars, catapults, and mammoth bows, which, although they looked grotesque enough when lying idle, would be sufficiently terrible when they were bent with deadly intent in time of war. The chamber below, which was lighted by lance windows, would serve as an ample barrack for forty men, or more in case of need, and, in fact, the whole was as complete as could be wished for.

The question of military service presented no difficulty. So eager were the islanders to retrieve their former error, that the whole male population volunteered in a body, and the fortnight's spell of guard duty was accounted the highest reward a man could receive.

The erection of these defences took up a considerable period of time, and in the meanwhile improvements were going on ashore. No radical changes were effected. No drastic measures were used to eliminate old faults. But little by little the islanders were induced to adopt useful innovations, and to discard their old crude, ineffectual, and often unhealthy makeshifts.

King Alexander spared no pains for the amelioration of his subjects' condition, and his two European counsellors nobly seconded his majesty's efforts.

BOOK VI.

CONCERNING ANOTHER VOYAGE.

How the brig Eliza Williams *rescued two starving men from a canoe out at sea: how these two men were pressed on board H.B.M.S.* Serpent, *and met an old acquaintance in her captain: and how Sandy Carmichael, alias King Alexander, proved to be Henry Weldon Vivian Esquire.*

"Hand 'em down below, poor beggars; and, doctor, you do what you can. Mr. Thomas, swing the mainyard, and let's be moving again. We've missed well nigh an hour of this fair breeze as it is. Not that I grudge it. No grub, open boat, and wide ocean, is a mixture that calls for any sailor's sympathies. But it's no use wasting more time now we've got 'em snugly aboard. Wonder where they came from? The canoe was a dug-out, the bo's'n said. Blown off some island probably. However, it's no use guessing. They'll come-to, I suppose, with grub and drink and nursing, and then if they haven't forgotten their mother tongues, I suppose they can talk to us."

And Captain Body, of the brig *Eliza Williams*, replaced his long brass-bound telescope in its beckets within the companion, and resumed his walk along the weather quarter-deck, which had been interrupted an hour before by the look-out's cry of "Men waving from a small boat broad on the lee bow."

What had happened, the reader has probably guessed already. Captain Body's surmise was the correct one. The two men—they were our acquaintances, Lawrence Sneyd, and Murtagh O'Neill—had gone outside the reefs for an afternoon's fishing. It had come on to blow, and unable to make headway against the wind, they were compelled to let their frail craft drift before it. They had gone through a good deal of suffering, and had finally been sighted and picked up by the brig. Very weak, and pretty well unconscious from exhaustion when hauled on board, they dozed and slept for the greater part of two days; and on the third, when they came on deck again, they found that the brig had been spanking along a southerly course before a fair wind. It would have been useless to ask her skipper to beat up again

* Many wrecks have occurred here, some of them of historical note. The rock lies off the coast between Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle, and has caused at one time or another an immense loss of life. It is now marked with a light which revolves every half-minute, and throws a ray forty miles on a clear night.

† Coral is a carbonate of calcium, and when roasted yields calcium oxide (quicklime) just as do the older mineral limestones. When water is added, the hydrate, commonly called "slack lime," is formed.

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for the island, and so they forebore to court a certain refusal by doing so.

Captain Body heard their tale with great interest, and at its conclusion said, "Well, I'm sorry we haven't got your shipmate — what's his name — Carmichael, for I daresay he'd be glad enough to throw up his kingly honours if he got the chance. However it's out of the question to 'bout ship and hunt him up even if you could spot your island on the chart, which you can't with any degree of accuracy. But it strikes me that you two fellows are rather in luck's way. You didn't think so when you were starving in that canoe, but I expect you're a bit glad now at not having the prospect of leaving your bones amongst savages always before you."

"There are savages and savages," said Sneyd, "and I've come across far worse people to live amongst than the Ermans. However, although everything was very comfortable, and it is quite possible to fare worse elsewhere, I wasn't quite reconciled to spending the rest of my days on the island."

"And you, O'Neill?" asked Body, "aren't you much of the same mind?"

"I can't say I am, Captain. In fact, very much the reverse. Yez see, it's me wife I'm thinking about."

"Pooh! my good fellow. A very lucky escape for you. A nigger woman's no proper mate for a white man."

"See here, Captain Body," said the Irishman, standing up and looking very black, "if there's anybody aboard this brig that's going to sneer at Norah—at me wife, that is—you'd better clap me in irons straight away to keep me fingers out of mischief. For as sure as death, there'll be murther done av I hear any more of it. She's the thruest, pluckiest, lovinest darlint from here to Chaney an' back again t'other way; an' as for her hide bein' black, 'tisn't as dark as me own, nor yours either, for the matter of that. So there's the matter put squarely."

"Come, come, O'Neill," said Body, "I didn't mean to offend you. 'Pon my word, I didn't. Besides, I was mistaken. I thought the lady was as black as the bottom of a kettle."

"An' av she was," growled the Irishman, "that wouldn't make any difference. It's her heart I love her for, not her hide."

"Well, well," said the captain, nettled at the way O'Neill took his overture, "we'll say no more about it. I'll put you ashore the first time I can, and you may swim back, or fly back if you want to. Or if you like, I'll give you a passage round to Port Royal. Gentlemen, I wish you both good morning."

"You've put the skipper's back up," remarked Sneyd when Body had gone below.

"Then he should kape a civil tongue in his head about my poor darlint. Losin' her's bad enough, but to hear every brass-bound sea pedlar that plases, sneer at her because she's not the colour of his own tallow-faced womenkind at home, just sets me in the humour that men are when they hit a thwack at any one, an' mane to hurt 'em."

The *Eliza Williams* ran round the Horn, and up the South American Coast to the West India Islands, making a good fast passage of it all the way. The two passengers had a fair enough time of it on the whole, for they were fed and clothed, had a snug bunk, and the society of the officers and of one another; but Body never forgave O'Neill's vigorous defence of Norah; and as he made himself stiff and unpleasant henceforward, as only a ship's autocrat can, they determined to quit the brig at Jamaica and not trespass on his hospitality any longer.

They certainly did quit her, and in a manner they were hardly prepared for.

Hardly was the anchor down in Port Royal mud, than a boat put off from one of the British men-of-war lying in the harbour, and pulled quickly alongside. An officer sprang on board, and after a few preliminary questions called for volunteers for His Majesty's service. There was no response, so getting part of his boat's crew on deck to back him up in case of a row, he proceeded, according to the manner of the day, to "press" any men who struck his fancy. The whole crew was mustered and made to toe a line. Sneyd and O'Neill had to join the parade. The king's officer spotted them out first of all—mighty compliment—and bade them go down into the boat. Body, to do him justice, tried hard to get them released. But the lieutenant was obdurate. He was sorry, extremely sorry. And he was quite willing to admit that the case was a hard one: the hardest, in fact, that had ever come to his ears. But His Majesty was in desperate need of men, and two such sturdy-looking fellows as these were not to be passed over at any price. If they showed ability they might get on the quarter-deck. But be that as it might, he was determined on one point. H. B. M. S. *Serpent* was going to have their services, so into the boat they were trundled.

Six other unfortunates scrambled down the brig's sides dunnage in hand; and then the lieutenant and his men followed, and the boat pulled away to the *Serpent*

The pressed men were mustered on the quarter-deck, and the lieutenant dived below to tell the captain of his haul.

In five minutes or so, the captain came on deck. He was a short, slim, accurately dressed little man, in silk stockings, knee-breeches, snow-white kerseymere waistcoat with long flaps reaching over the hips, laced cut-away coat with heavy bullion epaulets, and a gold-laced cocked hat. His shoe-buckles sparkled with brilliants, and the long ruffles which fell over his hands were of Valenciennes lace.

At the sight of this nautical dandy, our two friends started with surprise: at the sound of his voice, clear, quiet, and precise, they exchanged a glance and nodded. It was their old commander in the *Fortune's Favourite*, Reuben Grum, who stood before them.

The recognition was not mutual. In the two brown-bearded men, attired in oddments selected from the pursers store of a small brig, the captain of the *Serpent* did not recognise two officers who had served under him before he held His Britannic Majesty's commission. But when their names were called out he stared at them curiously, and asked where they were from last.

"That is a long story, Captain Grum," said Sneyd "but some nine years ago I sailed into these waters for the first time in the snow *Fortune's Favourite* of Bristol."

"Ha, I thought I had seen you both before. I won't impress you into the service. Just stand on one side for the present, till I have gone through these other men, and then I'll come and talk to you. I may have some news that you will find interesting. And, by the way, my name is Vivian—Captain Charles Vivian."

They waited for a few minutes whilst the pressed men were being persuaded to "volunteer" (which they all did so as to receive the bounty money), and then they went below into the captain's cabin. His steward brought in wine and glasses, and when they were alone the little man asked what they had been doing all those long years. "Gauntlett reported," he said "that you two, and that promising young Carmichael, had gone away after ambergris in the jolly-boat, and got separated from the schooner in a black squall. Indeed, so positive was he that you were lost that he did not even run back after the weather had cleared to look for you."

Sneyd gave a brief account of their adventures, and when he had concluded, the captain said, "Then you must let me offer you a passage back to England. I shall get my sailing orders to-morrow or the next day, so you won't run a chance of getting your adventures capped by a spell of the yellow fever which is raging ashore just now. And, moreover, there's a tremendous lot of prize money for you both to finger. I had the making up of the schooner's books as well as the snow's, and entered you both as

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'missing,' so that if you did turn up again, you could be defrauded of nothing. Interest will have accrued, and I must congratulate each of you on having a small fortune to come into. That haul at Callao was a lucky one. By the way, I suppose you don't know, but the place was levelled by an earthquake soon after you left."

After expressing their thanks for the various kindnesses done to them, Sneyd inquired why their entertainer had changed his name.

The little captain laughed.

"I was a young man of fashion in London once," he said, "and spent a good deal more money than I ought to have done. A crisis came. I saw two alternatives before me—to go to prison or the sea. I chose the latter, picked the ugliest name that came readily into my head—to wit, Reuben Grum, and, as you know, worked my way up to being skipper of a privateer. That brought me in money; but as the war showed every prospect of continuing, I aspired to something else besides, so I managed to get a lieutenancy by payment and interest in the King's service. After a hard-fought action, which was a lucky one for me, I was obliged to give myself an acting commandership, and worked my own vessel home with a prize of almost double her size in consort. Their Lordships at the Admiralty were pleased to confirm the commission, and shortly afterwards they still further honoured me by a promotion to post-rank. That, gentlemen, is, with the exception of one incident which is of a purely personal nature, the sum total of my history."

The expected orders came on the following day, and the anchor was hove short as soon as the boat which brought them was seen to leave the admiral's ship. The frigate was standing out of the harbour under full sail twenty minutes afterwards, all hands overjoyed to be homeward bound.

The officers were a very agreeable lot—the lieutenant who had pressed him being, so Sneyd thought, one of the nicest fellows he ever met—and the homeward voyage was a most pleasant one.

Their adventures on Erma and Daji formed a never-ending topic of conversation, Captain Vivian, in particular, being deeply interested in them. "Fancy that young fellow Carmichael being a king," he would say. "I always thought he was cut out for something beyond the ordinary run, and that if the chance did not come to him to rise, he'd just turn to and make the chance. But King of the Cannibals! I never dreamt he would aspire to that."

The little man was never tired of hearing about Sandy's exploits, and extolling the forethought or cleverness which prompted each one of them; and if Sneyd and O'Neill had not been thoroughly fond of their old shipmate and fellow-exile, they could not but have been over jealous of the praise that was so unstintingly showered down on him.

This seemed to dawn upon Captain Vivian one day, and he said. "You mustn't mind my thinking so much about the lad. The truth is, he reminded me, both in fact and manner, of some one who is dead. Of course, though, the resemblance is merely fancied, for the person of whom I speak was not called Carmichael."

"Sandy's name is not Carmichael either, for the matter of that," Sneyd remarked. "He was picked up at sea, and rechristened by the man who got hold of him."

"Picked up at sea?—you interest me, Sneyd. Do you know where?"

"Off the north coast of Ireland, somewhere. Let me see, what was the name of the place? Innis—something, but I've forgotten what."

"'Twas Innistrahul," said O'Neill.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Vivian. "You don't mean that?"

"I most certainly do," replied Sneyd, with a look of surprise at the captain's violent agitation. "I remember now, Innistrahul was the name of the place."

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"And did he tell you nothing else?"

Sneyd mentioned the few trifling details of the wreck which had been imparted to him, and then repeated the brief sketch Sandy had given of his early life.

"Bridget was the nurse's name?" inquired Vivian.

"Yes. She was an old woman, he said, with a nutcracker nose and chin."

"And the man, the father, how did he describe him?"

"As being in figure very much like yourself."

"Great heavens, Sneyd, I was his father! Listen. I told you the other day that there was a personal incident left out in the history I gave you. It was this. I married when a very young man. My wife and I were devoted to one another for a year. Then a child was born—a boy—at the cost of her life. He was nursed by my wife's old nurse, Bridget. Difficulties pressed upon me, and I determined to start life afresh in America. With Bridget and the child I went on board a barque, the *Chesapeake*, at Liverpool. She called at Belfast Lough, passed out through the North Channel, and was blundered by her drunken skipper on to an outlier of Innistrahul. The vessel was an old one, and began to break up the moment we struck. Thinking to save my child, I lashed him to a coop, and jumped overboard with him. The first sea dashed the coop from my grasp. I never saw it again. The wind influenced its course and drove it away from the rocks. Being lower in the water, the tide sent me ashore bruised, half-drowned, but still alive. When I was afloat, none of the crowd on the rocks would touch me—they think it brings ill-luck to finger a drowning man—but once I had crawled up high and dry they were kind enough.

"I got well and found myself, as I thought, alone in the world—without ties and without kindred. Besides this I was penniless. And so I got down to Belfast and shipped before the mast. The rest is as I've told you.

"And so your Sandy Carmichael, your King Alexander, is Henry Weldon Vivian."

This was news with a vengeance, and they discussed it over and over till far into the night. Captain Vivian was fully determined his son should at least have the opportunity of returning to England, which Sneyd was positive he would accept now that he had kindred to welcome him. O'Neill wanted to be with Norah, either in Erma or Ireland. And Sneyd was willing to do most things to serve the two companions of his exile; but he was naturally anxious to get back and see his own people first.

So it was finally decided that a vessel was to be chartered (or bought) of sufficient size to sail to the island. Sneyd promised to join her after he had enjoyed three months ashore, by which time Murtagh O'Neill said he would have her stored, fitted, armed, and ready for sea; and Captain Vivian declared that if their Lordships at the Admiralty could not give him extended leave, he would throw up his commission and quit the service.

And to cut a long yarn short, matters turned out to suit them all. The war came to an end, and a smart topsail schooner worked her way round into the South Seas, and after much trouble found the island of Erma, and ran past the white fort into the lagoon. Sandy was only too glad of the chance of returning to England with his father if only he could resign his kingship into fitting hands, and as O'Neill had determined to stay in the island, that difficulty was soon solved for him. The Irishman assumed the sceptre, with Norah for his queen, and Sneyd and the Vivians, promising to communicate with them if ever a chance occurred, passed out again through the barrier reef, and headed once more towards their home waters in the distant east.

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Order it of your Chemist and be sure and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious. SEND FOR IT AT ONCE as you value the health of your skin.

THREE TINTS: BLANCHE, NATURELLE, and RACHEL.

Order of all Chemists, Hairdressers, Stores, &c.

PRICE ONE SHILLING. BY POST 1/2.

The LILLIE SYNDICATE,

3 (S.S.) HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine **39/-** To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work.

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.,
188B High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.;
63 Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

JUNO CYCLES

ARE THE VERY BEST AND MOST UP-TO-DATE.

Carriage Paid. Cash Discount.

Write for New Season's List.

JUNO Cycles and Accessories sent Post Free.

LISTS POST FREE

Juno No. 4, £10 10s. 17/6 monthly.

	Monthly		Monthly		Monthly
£10	16/8	£12	20/-	£14 14s.	24/6
£10 10s.	17/6	£12 12s.	21/-	£15 15s.	26/3

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO. Ltd.,

Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

Typewriters, £9 9s. 15s. 9d. Monthly.

PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.

Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 5/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

THE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL PIANOFORTE CO.,
Granby St. & Selborne St., LIVERPOOL.
Agents wanted where not represented.

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Your Esteemed Inquiry Duly to Hand.

O. C.—What may be described as the best-lighted piece of sea or ocean highway is that known as "The Downs," where light is needed to warn ships of the Goodwin Sands that stretch from Dover to Ramsgate at a distance of five miles from the mainland. There are four lightships for that short extent of ocean highway.

P. T.—In almost all languages you will find the word "sack" with practically the same meaning—that is, a bag of greater or less proportions. The spelling differs slightly, according to the usage of the language—as *sac* in French—but it is the same word.

H. A. C.—It is one of the rules of the Honourable Artillery Company of Boston that each officer, at the end of his term of command, which lasts a year, shall return to the ranks as a private. Thus it happens that there is generally in the ranks of this regiment about a dozen gentlemen who have at some time had full control of it and show themselves still willing to obey.

H.—The ancient city of Troy was on a hill. On this hill were found, in successive layers, the remains of four cities, all of which had evidently been destroyed by fire.

H. F. L.—Frank Uncles has made 2,000 consecutive jumps with a skipping-rope, without a miss, in 14min. 30sec., at Auburn, N.Y., in 1881.

B.—The Baron Lyndhurst who was Lord Chancellor during the period 1827-30 was born in America. His father was an artist, and was living in Boston when the War of Independence began; he decided to remain a British subject at the conclusion of the struggle, and came to London with his wife and the future Keeper of the King's Conscience.

F.—"Canary colour" usually indicates a bright yellow. But the bird that may be called the real canary—that from the Canary Islands—is of a greenish yellow.

Lesser.—Directly a Chinaman's household gets up in the morning crackers are exploded under the doorways to drive away any evil spirits which may have collected there during the night. The hubbub which this occasions baffles all description, and it is a long time before new arrivals in Shanghai become accustomed to it.

I. M. M. T.—At the annual fair at Wat Saraphm, Siam, there is a game, in which an expert swimmer gets into a pond, and pretends to be a "ngenak" or merman. The people stand round and try to catch him when he comes to the top of the water.

Bookworm.—Twenty-four new books, on an average, are published in Great Britain every day.

L. B.—Oysters that have been taken from the sea know as if by instinct the time when the tide is coming in, and open their shells to receive their food from the waters.

J. M.—Yes; at Sikhalin, off the east coast of Siberia, the conditions you mention may be observed. Instead of the high places bring cold and those near the sea-level being warmest, the reverse is the case. On the coast, the vegetation is of an Arctic character; on the heights, the plants grow with tropical luxuriance. This is due to the action of the wind and to the sea currents.

G. K.—The shark has no bones; a cartilaginous material forms an efficient substitute.

H. L.—A Russian bride is not submitted to the trying ordeal of appearing in white satin and lace in cold, broad daylight. The wedding takes place by candle light in the drawing-room.

L. G.—In the Swiss Parliament the three national languages—French, German and Italian—are allowed, but the last-named is used much less often than the others. You may hear a speech in French followed by one in German and another in Italian. If the president be a German Swiss, his remarks are immediately repeated in French by an official at his side; and in the reverse case the remarks are repeated in German. The laws and resolutions are published in all three tongues.

D. H.—In Yuentab, Central America, all the girls of a family are dressed precisely alike, even to the tying of a bow, or the flower in the hair.

Spark.—According to a German electrician, the electric spark is not so simple as it appears. It is preceded by several brush or fan-like discharges from each pole, each successive discharge extending further outwards until the gap is bridged and the spark passes. He believes that a similar phenomenon precedes lightning.

T.—Yes, the deer really weeps, its eyes being provided with lachrymal glands.

Q.—The Queen's Speech was first transmitted by telegraph in November, 1847, when the rate of transmission was fifty-five letters a minute. Even in 1871 it was considered a great feat to transmit ninety-one words per minute. Four hundred is now a common speed.

Summer.—A Spanish author has written five novels of unique description. The first is without the letter A, the second without E, the third without I, the fourth without O, and the fifth without U

Vera.—People who sleep with their mouths shut live the longest.

R. C.—On certain days the Hindoos regard gambling as a religious duty.

3rd Tower Hamlets.—Nearly every corps in the German Army has a chiropodist in its ranks.

A. C.—Five hundred trading vessels leave the Thames daily for all parts of the world.

D. S. B.—About one half of the population of Jerusalem are Jews, and the remainder Moslems and Christians, the former being in the majority.

King Dick.—When the world's population exceeds 5,994,000,000, the earth will be unable to find nourishment for her people, and they will be forced either to cannibalism or starvation. This figure will be reached in about 280 years.

Laura.—Of the entire human race it is estimated that 500,000,000 are well clothed—that is, they wear garments of some kind; 250 000,000 habitually go naked; 700,000,000 cover only parts of their body; 500,000,000 live in houses; 700,000,000 in huts and caves; and 250,000,000 have virtually no shelter at all.

Goethe.—There is a small stream in Syria, formed by the water from several springs, which contains a large number of fishes all having strange eyes. Some have one eye protruding and the other sunken; in others, the two eyes protrude but are of different sizes; others, again, have a normal eye and a rudimentary one. They form the oddest collection of fish it is possible to find, but the cause of this peculiarity remains a mystery.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page " " " ...	5	0	0
Quarter-page " " " ...	2	10	0
Eighth-page " " " ...	1	5	0
Front page, whole " " ...	12	10	0
" half	6	5	0

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Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, March **28th**, if intended for the Issue on sale April **11th**, and dated April **15th**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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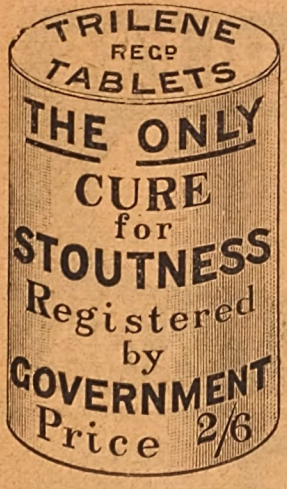
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

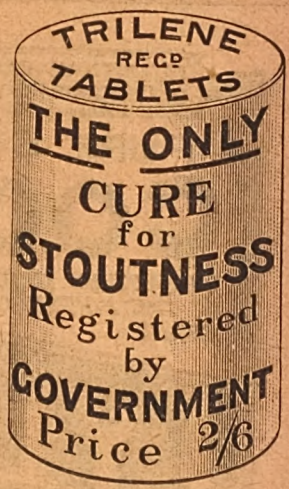
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr, Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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"Ivy" Soap
IT FLOATS!

PRICE 3D. PER LARGE DOUBLE TABLET

ITS REMARKABLE PROPERTY OF FLOATING ON WATER PREVENTS THE ANNOYANCE OF LOSING THE SOAP, AS IT IS ALWAYS IN SIGHT—READY WHEN WANTED.
TO BE HAD OF ALL GROCERS, STORES, ETC.
IF ANY DIFFICULTY, THREE CAKES WILL BE SENT CARRIAGE PAID, ON RECEIPT OF ADDRESS & TWELVE STAMPS OR ONE SHILLING POSTAL ORDER. BY
SOLE GOODWINS' MAKER
371, Ordsall Lane, Manchester.

NUTRITIOUS, EASILY DIGESTED, OF DELICIOUS FLAVOUR & AROMA.
PURE SOLUBLE
COCOA
GUARANTEED TO BE THE PRODUCT OF THE FINEST COCOA BEANS.
LYLE'S
GOLDEN SYRUP.
LONGEST ESTABLISHED PUREST & BEST.

"MATCHLESS"
FREE FROM ACID, POISON OR GRIT.
"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.
"SIMPLE TE T."
Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.
LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD
METAL POLISH.
PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS LIVERPOOL.

RED WHITE AND BLUE
SOLD EVERYWHERE
FRENCH COFFEE
DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST OR AFTER DINNER.

IT IS NOT Reckitt's PARIS BLUE
UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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EASTER NUMBER. "THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK": NEW SERIAL BY J. FINNEMORE.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 535. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 1ST, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

Influenza:

(The After Effects)

How to regain lost Strength is one of the most troublesome problems a medical man is called upon to deal with. Disease itself soon passes away, but in nearly every instance some obstinacy is left behind. Influenza, for instance, yields readily enough to a well directed form of strengthening treatment, but the after feelings of Languor, Depression, and Loss of Strength, are indeed obstinate troubles to permanently remove.

These are just the cases where Guy's Tonic proves so Valuable. This is not surprising when it is borne in mind that this Valuable Medicine actually strengthens the walls of the Stomach, the very Organ that is called upon to supply the Frame with sufficient Nourishment to maintain Health as well as to build up the System generally. Nothing is so conducive to Health of Body and Vigour of Mind as this safe and reliable Vegetable Tonic.

If you are Pale, Anæmic, or very Thin, or have become Weakened by overwork, Worry, Excesses, or Fatigue, fortify your System and reinforce your Strength by a few doses of Guy's Tonic. Remember, ordinary tonics will not do, it must be this Nourishing Vegetable Preparation. Guy's Tonic contains certain strengthening properties peculiar to itself. It is rich in the exact material needed to bring back lost strength.

"Vitalise the System."

Mr. B. HOWARD, the Evangelist, of Ryall Grove, Earl's Croome, Worcestershire, writes:

"After a bad turn of Influenza I know nothing on "earth so suitable as Guy's Tonic to build up the "wreckage, vitalise the System, and give one nerve "and force. When I received the Tonic, I said to "Mrs. Howard, 'Now this is Life itself'; and if in "future these enlarged bottles of Guy's Tonic are to "be sold for 2s 9d., the Public will find Guy's Tonic "not only Best but Cheapest."

Guy's Tonic deserves British support because it is a British product throughout, and because it is prepared by Skilled British Pharmacists from the formula of an English Physician.

Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle, is on sale at all Chemists and Stores.

10'6 Allen Foster & Co. 10'6

SOLE MAKERS OF THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

Buy Direct by Parcels Post from the Leading Firm of London Manufacturers.

Great Bargains In Ladies' Costume Skirts, In Black and Navy Serge (lined throughout). Price only 3/11; carriage paid, 5d. extra.

Design No. 94. 10/6

Design No. 94.

HALF-A-GUINEA.

Design No. 94 is a truly marvellous creation as a Costume. It stands unrivalled in point of value, style, and appearance—acknowledged everywhere **the best Half-Guinea Costume of the Season.** It is produced in the excellent **Venetian Cloth** or in the **Specialite Serge**—two grand cloths, unsurpassed for wear and durability. It is a **velvet trimmed** Costume with bodice and sleeves lined. It has a pretty pleated front and fits tight to the figure. The skirt is cut full and well-made. Truly marvellous value, and only **10/6** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra; or Skirt alone, **5/6**; carr. 5d. extra.

Design No. 97. 10/6

Design No. 97.

HALF-A-GUINEA.

Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable Chesterfield Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or in the **Specialite Serge** for **Half-a-Guinea.** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at **5/6**; Carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric, Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple.

New SPRING SKETCH BOOK OF FASHIONS sent Post Free on application.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

The London Manufacturers,

17 ROSCOE STREET, GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

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COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

MASON'S ESSENCE OF COFFEE AND CHICORY

EXPELS THE OLD METHOD

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY
MASON'S WINE ESSENCES
AND
MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3 three assorted 1/8.
Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—
NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL
BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
SUCH AS
Sick Headache, Constipation,
Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.
SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.
In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.
Prepared only by the Proprietor,
THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.
Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."*

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietors, 66 Pinsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

ZOX

CURES

NEURALGIA

Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

Do not be persuaded to take a substitute, there is nothing as good as ZOX.

Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 Hatton Garden, E.C.

FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

JUNO CYCLES

ARE THE VERY BEST AND MOST UP-TO-DATE.
Carriage Paid. Cash Discount.
Write for New Season's List.
JUNO Cycles and Accessories sent Post Free.

LISTS POST FREE

Road Racer, £10. 16s. 8d. Monthly.

	Monthly		Monthly		Monthly
£10	16/8	£12	20/-	£14 14s.	24/6
£10 10s.	17/6	£12 12s.	21/-	£15 15s.	26/3

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO. Ltd.,
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.
Typewriters, £9 9s. 15s. 9d. Monthly.

You will be pleased with CHANCELLOR SOAPS.

That's why we want YOU to try them. As First Prize we offer a £300 HOUSE, and hundreds of other prizes. By using Chancellor Soaps and saving your wrappers till June you get the best and cheapest Soaps extant, you may get the House or a 50 guinea Piano, you will probably get a splendid Lady's Silver Watch, or if not you must get a money Prize.

Every Competitor gets one.
GET A BAR TO-DAY!

Won't You?

Send 4d. for Sample Bar

GIVEN AWAY
HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A £300 HOUSE
LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.
CHANCELLOR SOAPS

to 13 Clerkenwell Road, London.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

INVESTED FUNDS £10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

COMFORT, CLEANLINESS AND CURE
FOLLOW THE USE OF
Dr. PAUL'S WHITE PILE OINTMENT.
Gives ease at once and effectually removes Piles, Cracks, Fissures and Ulcerations.
In boxes 1/- & 2/6 each. Post free 1/2 & 2/9
PENN & CO., 89, BLACKFRIARS ROAD, LONDON, S.E.

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SHORT STORIES . .
EASTER NUMBER.

No. 535.] For the Week ending April 1st, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

THE SIGHTLESS EYE

By JOHN G. ROWE

THE flaming Indian sun was beginning to dip below the horizon, as the officers of the 10th Cavalry, stationed at Cawnpore, dropped into the mess room by twos and threes.

"I tell you it is a fact," one officer was remarking to half a dozen others. "I have seen the thing placarded all over the town—a human eye painted over a triangular blood-red background. The eye was done perfectly, as if by some native genius, but the strange part of the thing was, there was no sight in it—no eyeball. It resembled for all the world the sightless eye of a statue."

"Bah!" said one of his listeners. "Some quack advertisement or other."

"No, not so, for underneath it in Hindostani were these words: 'The eye is sightless; the soul of India sleeps; it is not yet time.'"

There was a murmur of amazement among the group and then a dead silence which was presently broken by the observation from Captain Thompson, a tall, broad-shouldered Scotsman.

"Percival is quite right. I have also seen the thing several times in my peregrinations round the town. What it meant, though, I could not tell, as I do not know Hindostani as well as you, Harry, old man. But the eye is to be seen sure enough, you fellows. Specimens may not be very plentiful round the cantonments, but the artist has not been sparing of either his talent or his paint in the native quarters of the town. If any of you unbelievers care to stroll round that way you can see and judge for yourselves."

At this suggestion most of his auditors smiled, while one or two placed their fingers to their noses in a most expressive way. It was well known that the atmosphere and sanitary conditions of the native part of the town were none of the best. Very few of the white residents cared to visit that particular region oftener than they could possibly help.

"I don't see for the life of me," broke in a boyish subaltern, "what you are all getting into such a stew about, making a mountain out of a molehill. It's only those old fakirs at their tricks again, I'll be sworn! They're always at it! Let 'em alone, I say; they'll never do any real harm."

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The majority seemed to concur in this opinion, and the discussion of the mysterious "sightless eye" was soon allowed to drop for other and more convivial topics.

Captain Harry Percival, however, was by no means satisfied with the construction his brother officers were inclined to put upon the curious placard. He felt convinced there was some deep and hidden mystery behind it. What meant those words in Hindostani below the sign:—"The eye is sightless; the soul of India sleeps; it is not yet time"? They seemed to him to have only one possible interpretation, and that was, that they were meant as a secret signal from the chiefs of some conspiracy to its members. And what could such conspirators be plotting but the downfall of British supremacy in the land? treason and revolt, probably, against Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria.

The bare thought almost took his breath away. He remembered the "chupatties," or little cakes, which were so mysteriously distributed among the Sepoys immediately prior to the horrible Mutiny of '57, and which propagated the seeds of revolt throughout the entire peninsula. Might not this extraordinary placard of an "unseeing eye," with its certainly pregnant inscription, have a similar meaning to those innocent-looking "little chupatties" be, in other words, the signal agreed upon by the natives for a general uprising.

Captain Percival was greatly perturbed, but he did not care to hint the dread suspicions, which had fastened upon him in spite of his utmost efforts to reason himself out of them to any of his brother officers just yet. He had no real grounds for his fears, beyond the strange equivocal motto which appeared beneath the mysterious sign, and to hint what was passing through his mind would be sure only to bring down upon him the ridicule and banter of the whole regiment.

He retired to his room that night, feeling very ill at ease, for this cabalistic placard had quite got upon his nerves, and, as he stood by the open window, in order to let what little air there was moving cool his fevered brow, his eyes saw not the twinkling stars overhead or the dark landscape. They pictured nothing but that mystic sign of a sightless human eye standing out boldly

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Two pairs of strong arms dragged him from the bed.

from a triangular red background. To his vivid imagination the eye seemed to be swimming in a sea of blood——*human blood.*

At last, with a great effort of the will, the young fellow put the haunting chimera from him, and, undressing quickly, he got into bed and composed himself for sleep. It came to him at last, though he lay tossing about for long enough beforehand, vainly striving to put the vision of that "sightless eye" from his mind.

Tired out with the day's exertions, he was sleeping a deep, dreamless sleep, when all at once he was awakened by what he never afterwards could really tell. He made a move as though to sit up, when, horror of horrors, what was this? At the first movement he made, some sort of a gag was thrust by invisible hands into his mouth, effectually preventing him from uttering a cry, and, at the same moment, two pairs of strong arms dragged him from the bed.

Dumfoundered and dismayed Captain Percival stared round him. The lamp still burnt low on the dressing-table, and, by its faint illumination, he made out some half a dozen dusky-skinned, turbaned forms gathered round him. But what immediately fascinated him, while it at the same time sent a cold shiver down his spine, was the startling discovery that on the forehead of each of these strange nocturnal intruders was painted an eye, similar in every respect to that of the mystic sign which had caused him such uneasiness.

The singular device flickered and glowed with an uncertain phosphorescent light in each instance, giving the silent, statuesque figures a most ghastly and weird aspect.

Even as he stood wondering whether this was not all some hideous nightmare, a couple of pistols were clapped to his head, and a stern voice whispered: "Dress yourself quickly!" Believing discretion in this case to be the better part of valour, the young officer hastily obeyed the mandate; then a heavy cloak or bag was thrown over his head and shoulders from behind, and he felt himself grasped tightly by either arm and led from the room.

Down the stairs he was conducted and out of the house, his captors making not the slightest noise even in unfastening the front door. Captain Percival could tell from the impatient stamping of a horse that some sort of a conveyance was in waiting, and he wondered where Morari Rao, his *kitmutgar*, or native valet, could be, not to have been roused by the entry of these midnight visitors. The next minute, Percival felt himself lifted bodily by several pairs of strong arms and placed inside a closed vehicle. His captors seated themselves on either side of him, still gripping him by the arms, as though these were not securely tied. Then the horse was whipped up, and off they rattled at a smart pace.

To say that the young officer was in a fog, would be but to feebly express his state of mind. Who were his captors and whatever did they want with him? It was quite clear, from the strange device they each wore painted on their foreheads, that they were connected in some way with the curious placard which had so aroused his suspicions, and a vague dread seized upon him—that dread of the unknown and mysterious, which is far more unnerving than that given rise to by any known perils.

Who could they be? Dacoits? banditti? Then if so, they would learn they had had all their trouble in kidnapping him for nothing. He smiled bitterly; they would never get a heavy ransom for his release.

Then the suspicion that they might be members of some vast secret organisation or conspiracy, which had for its object the overthrow of British power in the land, once more asserted itself; yet why should even these bother themselves about the kidnapping of so unimportant an individual as himself? Would they not be more likely to go for much higher game—say some of the officials of the Government? Finally, he asked himself, was it possible he was in the hands of some murderous and mysterious brotherhood like the old-time Thugs. His brave heart almost sickened at the dread thought. But why should even such wretches make prisoner of him, when they could very easily have strangled him in his sleep?

His brain was in a whirl; his mind in chaos; he could not understand the affair at all.

Meanwhile, the carriage was tearing along over the rough roads at a terrific rate, and the captain felt certain they must have already left the town far behind.

So reckless was the driving that often the vehicle was within an ace of capsizing. It rocked and swayed frightfully, and the captive felt sore all over from the unmerciful jolting long before the speed was in any way moderated. After about an hour the pace was slackened, and a few minutes later the vehicle came to a dead stop.

A few low-muttered words passed between his guards, and then he was assisted to alight, whereupon the vehicle at once rattled away. With a heavy hand on either shoulder, the young officer stepped along, but where his strange captors were taking him, he had not the faintest idea. After traversing some dozen yards, a voice said in broken English:

"Take care, Sahib, you are going down steps now!"

Percival felt himself descending a flight of broken and crumbling stone steps, and presently found himself on a level pavement again. From the damp, musty odour which assailed his nostrils he judged he was treading some underground passage.

Along this he was conducted some distance; then the cloak was suddenly whipped from over his head, and, when his eyes grew accustomed to the radiance of his surroundings, he found himself standing in the midst of a vast vault, richly carpeted and hung with gorgeous

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tapestry. Luxurious ottomans and rugs were scattered about, and a soft mellow light was shed over all. As he stood in open-mouthed amazement, drinking in the richness of his surroundings, the myriad electric lamps that illuminated the place were suddenly turned on full, making the apartment one blaze of light. At the same instant, a heavy velvet hanging at one end of the vault was drawn aside by invisible agency, revealing, seated on cushions in a semi-circle, some score or so native chiefs.

They were all most magnificently attired in Oriental costume, but the central figure, who was raised some inches above the others by a daïs, outdid them all in splendour. His garments were simply ablaze with jewels and gold and silver ornaments, and his turban was surmounted by a plume of bird of paradise feathers. Two richly-bedizened attendants stood behind this personage and slowly waved large fans of peacock feathers over his head, while the entire back was taken up by a band of armed men, clad in the handsome and warlike chain-mail worn in bygone days by the fierce Mahratta cavalry. An officer amongst this martial array bore aloft a small swallow-tailed pennon of cloth of gold.

There on his own forehead gleamed a great eye.

Captain Percival thought of a surety he must be in dreamland. This was all too unreal. He would wake up shortly and find he had been the victim of a very vivid dream, brought on, doubtless, by his brooding over the strange placard so late. As in a trance, he heard a loud voice, speaking in Hindostani, bid him advance, and almost involuntarily he obeyed.

Detaining grasps on either shoulder made him halt a yard or two in front of the gay semi-circle, and now it dawned upon him that after all this was no dream, but a very stern reality. He looked more closely at the glittering throng before him, and a cold shiver swept over him as he saw now for the first time that in the centre of each dark forehead, just as in the case of his kidnappers, gleamed that terribly mysterious "sightless eye." It shone with no mere phosphorescent flicker now, though beams of dazzling light shot from each of those awful eyes.

"What, oh, Heaven, does all this mystery mean?" Percival asked himself. "What is about to happen?"

In vain his bewildered glance wandered round the assembly to see if he could recognise a single face. He was baffled. Over the lower part of each individual's features hung a veil of black silk, which completely concealed the identity of the wearer.

Again a voice addressed him in Hindostani, and it appeared to come from the central and chief figure.

"*Feringhee*, we give thee welcome and trust thy stay with us will be long and pleasant. That it be so will depend entirely upon thyself. Unbind his arms and release his tongue. We would have him answer certain questions."

While his guards were untying the ropes which bound his arms, and removing the gag from his mouth, the captain was cudgelling his brains to think where and when he had heard that voice before. For the life of him he could not recall, but he looked closer at the speaker and strove desperately to penetrate the mask.

"Now, *Feringhee*," again spoke the Unknown, "listen well to what we say to thee, for on thy reply will depend thy life. Thou beholdest in me the lineal descendant of the ancient Mahratta Peishwas. Hunooman, the monkey god has revealed unto me in a dream that I am the one chosen to free my native land from the hated grasp of the White Queen, to do that which Dundoo Punt, commonly called by your fellow-countrymen, Nana Sahib, failed to do, viz:—to drive out the white people and establish a Mahratta dynasty once more in Hindostan. The time to strike the blow for freedom was likewise revealed to me by the monkey god, though it would not arrive until there was to be found in India a white man, a *Feringhee*, who would bear upon his forehead, too, the symbol of the Sacred Eye. Thou, Percival Sahib, art that man—the Chosen of Hunooman! Thou dost bear on thy forehead the Living Eye. Behold, Mahrattas all, Sons of Sevajee the Great! Behold the Promised Sign—the Living Eye!"

To his own immeasurable horror and amazement, Captain Percival, even as the Mahratta chief uttered these words, felt a tingling, burning sensation on his forehead. He was about to raise his right hand to it, when one of his guards swung him half round, and he found himself facing a heavy, gold-mounted mirror. In it he beheld a full-length reflection of himself, and—Heaven above! Was he mad or dreaming?

There on his own forehead gleamed a great eye—not sightless like those around, but living, seeing apparently, the eyeball flashing forth fierce looks on every hand.

Percival stood as one turned to stone, gazing in something akin to superstitious terror at his image in the glass. Not so the assembled chiefs. As they beheld the marvellous occurrence, one and all sprang to their feet, and, drawing their tulwars, they clashed the blades together over their heads, at the same time making the chamber ring with their fierce cries. Then, sheathing their swords again, the whole crowd came swarming round the young officer with extended hands.

But he had recovered from the first shock of surprise and horror, and now, with a sweep of his arms, he hurled aside the one or two who stood between him and the central figure on the dais, and shouted:

"Base traitors! I know not what devilish sorcery or trickery you have been practising on me, but this I do know, that I am a loyal subject of Her Majesty, and here and now will I punish you, arch-rebel, who have dared to utter such treason before a soldier of your Queen!"

Ere one of those surrounding him could prevent him, the gallant officer made a spring, caught the ringleader on the dais by the throat, and, in a moment, both were struggling in fierce conflict on the thickly-carpeted floor. In a trice, however, they were torn apart, but not before Percival had snatched the mask from the other's face and disclosed to his astonishment the swarthy features of Morari Rao, his own native servant.

The captain was quickly reduced to helplessness once more, and, as he lay panting from his exertions and overcome with astonishment, the rogue he had unmasked, in a frenzy of chagrin and rage kicked him savagely and vindictively again and again.

"Away with him to one of the dungeons!" the villian screamed. "Away with him and see that you guard him well! Your lives will pay the forfeit if he escapes! The success of the great and sacred cause we are all embarking upon depends upon his safe-keeping."

Unable to resist, Percival was dragged from the vault, down a short flight of stone steps, and thrown into a damp, foul cell opening off a long, narrow gallery. The door was locked and bolted upon him, and he was left to the bitterness of his own reflections. It was pitch dark in the cell, and, after a while, despite the novelty and peril of his situation, drowsiness assailed him and he fell into a sound slumber.

How long he had slept he had no means of knowing, but suddenly he was aroused by a low rumbling noise and a bright light flooded the cell.

To his amazement he saw that a portion of the stone wall had rolled aside, and in the aperture stood a white-robed, dark-visaged form with a lantern in one hand.

"Hist, Sahib! I am a friend. I am Sadjee Bassa, the poor Hindoo whom you pulled out of the stream when he was drowning. I have come to set you at liberty. Morari Rao seeks your life for that insult you offered him. He will never let you depart from this place alive. But I will aid you to escape in return for your past kindness."

The speaker glided up to the prisoner, and, with a few deft slashes of a knife, freed his arms and legs. Percival, in delighted amaze, scrambled to his feet and began stammering out his thanks to his rescuer; but the latter placed his finger on his lips, and taking up the lantern again beckoned to the young officer to follow him. His strange guide led him through several passages until they reached a flight of steps leading upwards. The Hindoo pressed a spring in the wall of the passage, and a great slab at the top of the steps, and which had hitherto barred all exit, rose on end like a trapdoor. Quickly mounting the stairs, the pair passed through the opening, and Percival found himself standing amongst the ruins of the old palace of Bithoor, the former stronghold of the dethroned Peishwa, of the Mahrattas, Bajee Rao, and also of his adopted son, Nana Sahib of infamous memory.

The place was burnt by Havelock's army after the defeat of the Sepoys at Cawnpore.

The discovery of where he was and the associations of the place at once recalled to the Englishman's mind the strange words of his rascally servant, Morari Rao. The fellow had claimed to be the lineal descendant of the ancient Mahratta Peishwas, or sovereigns, and declared his intention of emulating the atrocities of Nana Sahib in an attempt to upset British rule, and establish a Mahratta empire again. He was recalled to himself by the guide laying a hand on his, and whispering:

"Go now, *Feringhee*, go in peace! I have saved your life in return for the past. Fly! Save yourself! Listen to me. When you reach the city of Cawnpore, stay not in it another day. The Time of Fate has come! The Sacred Eye of Siva, the God of Destruction, is no longer sightless. It is open—seeing! It flashes forth glances of rage, and hate, and vengeance upon its foes! The appearance of the Living Eye upon thy brow, O Englishman, has inaugurated the great uprising. Ere to-morrow's sun has set, the Living Eye will have replaced the Sightless one on every placard throughout the Mahratta country. Even now, fast messengers are speeding in every direction, carrying the news that the Promised Sign has appeared, and to-morrow's eve will see the whole Maharatta race in armed revolt against the White Queen and her minister. Fly, *Feringhee*, while yet thou may'st, for to-morrow will see the blood of your countrymen flow like water!"

Before Percival could make a move to detain him, the Hindoo turned and disappeared among the ruins of a once handsome colonnade.

The Englishman was not anxious to linger in that spot, so he set off at once in the direction of Cawnpore. He gained the high road without meeting any sentinel, and then he hurried forward at his fastest pace, sometimes running, at other times dropping into a walk to recover his wind. He met not a native on the way, but as he drew near the city, he caught sight of several of the signs of the Sightless Eye painted on dead walls and tree trunks. He did not stop to look at the first few, but all at once he remembered the words of his deliverer, Sadjee Bassa, and he halted for a moment to examine one on the crumbling wall of an old bungalow.

It was no longer a *sightless eye* that was pictured before him, but one that almost seemed to live—to be darting a look of vengeful fury upon him. The eyeball had been painted in with such marvellous skill as almost to make one believe the eye was endowed with life. A daub of paint had obliterated the other motto, and in its place was this one:—"The eye sees; the soul of India awakes; it is time."

Like letters of fire these words seemed to sear his very brain. He gave a groan of agonised despair. Heavens! Would he yet be in time to avert the dread calamity which was impending? With a heartfelt prayer, he set off once more at headlong speed.

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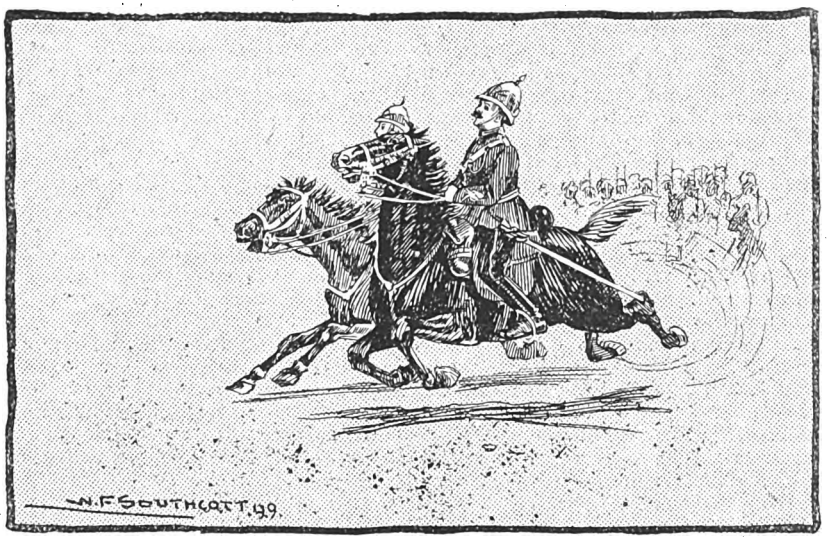
The bugles in the cantonments of Cawnpore were sounding the *réveille*, when a panting and dishevelled figure presented itself at the door of Colonel Mansell's residence and desired immediate audience with him. It was his subordinate officer, Captain Percival. The latter quickly informed his superior of his extraordinary adventures, and the day was not much older before the astounding news he had to tell was being flashed all over the country.

Quick to see the necessity for an immediate attempt to capture the ringleaders in the plot, the colonel acceded to Percival's proposal to take a strong force and search the ruins. In less than an hour that young officer and Captain Thompson galloped out of the town at the head of a squad of cavalry.

The horses were put to their utmost speed, and fairly flew over the ground, and very soon the ruins of the old palace hove in sight. The secret entrance to the vaults below was easily found by Captain Percival, and, with the heavy sledges they had brought with them, the soldiers speedily shattered the slab and laid bare the subterranean stairway. Lighting lanterns, they were preparing to descend, when out of the inky darkness at the foot of the steps came a blaze of fire and a volley of musketry crashing amongst them. Several gallant fellows fell, but, with a ringing shout, Percival and Thompson leapt down the steps and their men swarmed after them.



The horses were put to their utmost speed.

A fierce and deadly hand-to-hand conflict now ensued in that gloomy tunnel below the earth's surface. The trapped rebels fought like so many fiends, and no quarter was asked or given. Pistols cracked, and sabre clashed against tulwar, while yells, oaths, and the stamping of feet drowned any cry for mercy that might have been uttered.

Suddenly there came a dead silence, a silence broken only by the groans of the wounded and the dying. The survivors of the rebel band had fled away into the deeper recesses of the crypt, and Captain Percival, knowing his men could never hope to overtake the nimble rascals among the mazy passages, which he had good reason to believe honeycombed the earth in every direction beneath the ruins, ordered them to fall back again to the top of the steps. They carried their wounded comrades up with them, and had nearly all regained the upper regions when a wild figure came dashing along the gallery towards them.

Captain Percival recognised the man at once as his rescuer the night before, the Hindoo, Sadjee Bassa.

"Fly for your lives!" he shrieked, "Fly! The Peishwa means to blow the whole up rather than be taken!"

In dismay and alarm, the soldiers, dragging their injured comrades with them, rushed from the fatal spot, and they had barely got out of the ruins, when there came a terrific explosion, and the earth opened to emit a mighty eruption of flame and smoke. Many of the soldiers had narrow escapes from the falling *débris*, but fortunately none were injured.

The self-styled Peishwa, however, with all his fellow-conspirators, had perished in that awful holocaust, and India was saved from another Sepoy Mutiny.

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A BARGAIN IN GEMS.

MR. SAMUEL MORTIMER gaily hummed a popular air as he made his way from the suburban railway station towards his home, where his coming was eagerly awaited by his little wife.

There were at least three causes for this happy state of mind. Firstly, he had unexpectedly come into possession of the sum of five pounds; this was for work done for a friend two years before, but as payment had been so long delayed he had for some months regarded it as a "bad debt." Secondly, he had that day been informed by his employer that the value of his services was to be recognised at the end of the week by an increase of salary. And, finally, to-morrow would be Nellie's birthday, and, as it was the first occasion of the kind since their marriage four months ago, they intended to celebrate it by a family party in the evening and have a good time.

The access of wealth represented by the five pounds would enable him to give his wife a really good birthday present, which gladdened the heart of Mr. Mortimer. Altogether, he was more pleased with himself than he had been since his wedding day.

He was walking quickly along a dark portion of one of the streets through which he had to pass to reach his home, when he was suddenly stopped by a man who asked him, in a low tone, if he wanted to buy a jewel to give to his wife. This question so strangely coincided with his own thoughts that he involuntarily asked to see the treasure.

"It's a ruby, sir," said the man, holding the stone towards the clerk. "Come under this lamp-post, and you can see it better."

They walked a few paces, and under the gas-lamp the man handed the stone to Mortimer for examination.

"It's dirt cheap, sir," continued the would-be seller; "it's come down in our family, but I can't get rid of it now we are so poor, 'cos the pawnbrokers would think I'd stole it, and I ain't got no proof to show how long it's been in our family. I wants two qu——I mean two soverins for it."

Now, it happened that Mr. Mortimer had had some experience of rubies, and even under the poor light of the street lamp he could see that the stone was worth considerably more than the sum asked. He had some misgiving that the transaction was not exactly a proper one, but his cupidity and his desire to please Nellie by giving her a handsome birthday present overcame his scruples. He requested the man to walk to a well-lighted, shop close by, so that he might better examine the stone and after having done so he gave the man two of the five gold coins which had come to him so unexpectedly that day, and pocketed the ruby.

Nellie was highly pleased with the stone, and the husband and wife, after considerable discussion, decided that a further portion of the five pounds should be spent in having the gem placed in a gold setting for use as a brooch.

The party went off splendidly on the following evening. Mrs. Mortimer exhibited the ruby to her admiring and envious relations, telling them that dear Samuel had purchased it for her, but not mentioning the exact circumstances of the transaction. "Dear Samuel" himself was so pleased with things in general, that on the next day he made several blunders in his work at the office and imperilled the promised rise.

That evening—it was Friday—Mr. Mortimer had to stay late at the office on extra work, and when he arrived at the station to take the train it had lost its usual busy aspect. On entering the carriage he was agreeably surprised to meet a City chum, who had taken the train at a station farther east. They had the compartment to themselves and were soon engaged in a lively conversation, in the course of which Mr. Mortimer naturally told his friend that he had purchased a magnificent ruby.

"I don't mind telling you in confidence," he said, with a knowing nod, "that I got it dirt cheap."

Then, growing still more confidential, he related the circumstance of the purchase.

"Do you think it all square, old man?" asked Mr. Jackson. "Some of those things are rather queer, you know. Makes me think of the tale I have just read—'The Red Stone of Delhi.' Read it?"

Mr. Jackson was a great novel reader, but Mortimer read very little except newspaper reports and certain sporting intelligence. Mortimer hadn't the least idea whether "The Red Stone of Delhi" was the last new and popular novel, or a portion of the Arabian Nights, so he endeavoured to cover his ignorance by assuming a lofty tone.

"No, I only read—er—classics and—er—scientific works, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Well, you ought to read it," asserted Jackson. "The idea is a bit hackneyed, of course, but it's well worked out, and will interest you because it is about a ruby. A British officer steals it from the head of an Indian god and brings it with him to England, and the priests track him in order to recover the stone, and the officer is found one morning in his own room, dead, with a dagger in his back. That's the kind of thing, but it's splendidly written. One of the most sensational things that I ever read. Why, I've got it in my pocket, so I have. Here you read it; it's not very long."

"Do you mean to say," queried Mortimer in a scared tone, as he took the book, "that the priests murdered the officer to get the stone back?"

"Of course they did! Those beggars wouldn't stop at anything to get back one of their holy stones. I say, though," as the idea struck him. "Suppose your stone was something of that kind? It might be, you know."

"Oh no, it isn't!" returned Mortimer, but his cheek, paled and his voice trembled. "That would be awful, wouldn't it? But I am sure it isn't."

"Well, it's quite likely," remarked Jackson. "Anyhow, you read that tale; it's fine, I tell you. Hulloa, this is my station. Tat-a, see you again soon."

Mr. Samuel Mortimer felt decidedly uneasy as he opened the door of his suburban residence. Jackson's remark about the ruby had worried him considerably; he felt inclined to throw the paper-covered romance into somebody's back garden, but it fascinated him in spite of himself and he felt that he must read it. His wife was out that evening, and he did not expect her home until about eleven; so, after having lighted the gas and

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eaten the cold supper which she had laid ready for him, he drew his chair nearer the light and began to run through the story.

He did not wish to wade through all the opening chapters; Jackson had given him the outline of those: he wanted to see how the priests tracked the British officer, and finally murdered him in order to recover the stone.

That was the part which interested him most.

It was certainly a thrilling romance, and it worked so upon the feelings of Mr. Mortimer that when once he had fairly got into it he scarcely dared to look up. He had just reached the point where the officer is found face downwards upon the floor, with an ornamental dagger sticking in his back, and a Hindoo disappearing out of the window, when there was a slight report, something struck him on the head, the light flared up, and a loud knocking was heard at the front door.

With a cry of fright Mortimer dropped the book and sprang to his feet, glaring wildly round the room; then he heaved a sigh of relief as he realised that the chimney of his lamp had cracked, a piece of it striking him as it fell, and that his wife was knocking at the street door for admittance.

Mortimer made no reference to the subject to the partner of his joys and sorrows, and accounted for his pallid appearance by saying that he had been working very hard, and was very tired. His wife thereupon declared she would never again be out at night when he came home, but would be there to attend to him, and that a good night's rest was what he wanted, poor dear.

It certainly was what he wanted, but he didn't get it. His slumbers were troubled by hideous dreams of Hindoo priests and murdered British officers, and he awoke in the morning but little refreshed by eight hours spent in bed. All through the morning the feeling of discomfort remained with him and even the increase in his weekly wages failed to restore his equanimity.

He had an uneasy suspicion that he was being followed on his way home that afternoon. He looked back continually, but although it was broad daylight he could not substantiate the suspicion. Of course, he saw a man behind him whenever he looked, but there was nothing to denote that these men were in any way connected with Hindoo idols. He half resolved to kick Jackson the next time he saw him, for telling him about the story; and yet—there *might* be something in that gentleman's suggestion.

A couple of hours' gardening that afternoon and a quiet day on Sunday had a soothing effect upon Mortimer's nerves. It is true that, when his wife reminded him that he taken no steps to have the ruby set in a brooch, he dismissed the subject in such a hasty manner that she began to ask herself whether his affection was already on the wane; but by Monday morning he had almost recovered his usual spirits.

Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer had a pleasant little habit, or custom, in which they indulged every morning when Samuel departed for the City. She would go to one of the front windows and watch him part of the way down the street, while he would half turn at every few steps and lovingly shake one glove at her. This Monday morning the usual thing occurred; but as Nellie happened to have several things to do that morning, she only stood at the window for a second and then disappeared.

Mortimer had turned and shaken his glove, but not perceiving his wife he had gazed at the window for a longer period than usual, still walking. He was brought to a sense of his surroundings by colliding rather forcibily with someone coming in the opposite direction.

"I beg your par——," began Mortimer in his most apologetic tone, but the words simply froze on his lips when he found himself face to face with a man in the garb of a Hindoo priest, with flowing robe, turban and grave copper-coloured visage.

Heavens! What did this mean? In utter bewilderment and trembling in every limb, Mortimer turned and, glared at the figure of the man, who had passed on with a grave bow in acknowledgement of the half-uttered apology. Was it right, after all? was he, too, being tracked, like the officer in the story?

Mortimer never knew how he got to the office that day, nor how he went through the daily routine of business he had a faint notion that he had written the words "yours for ever" at the end of one business letter and had played havoc with one column of figures, but he was in a dream all the time. On his homeward journey, he peered here and there in the darkness to discover some trace of the Hindoo priest, but he reached home without mishap.

"My dear, what do you think?" demanded his wife as he seated himself at the table. "It is quite a piece of good fortune, I declare. I found that old gold brooch which Uncle James gave me some years ago, and I can make that ruby fit into it quite splendidly, If you were to bend one of the corner pieces just a little with your pincers the frame would hold the stone quite securely and then I could wear the brooch."

"You musn't!" cried Samuel, so hastily and fiercely that Nellie gave a little start and a cry of surprise. "That is," he added more quietly, "I—don't think—it would be quite safe, my dear."

"I can't think what has come to you lately," said Mrs. Mortimer unsteadily, drawing out her pocket handkerchief and conveying it to her eyes; "you seem to be getting very unkind."

"My work has been rather trying during the last day or so," explained Mortimer lamely. "There, don't cry; only don't wear that brooch—you might lose the stone, my love."

When Mr. Samuel Mortimer was ready to depart on the next morning he peeped out of the window for a sign of the Hindoo priest and felt slightly relieved at not seeing him; but he had not gone half the length of the street before he saw the grave figure walking slowly in the direction of his home. At the risk of losing his train and being late for work, Samuel turned and literally ran back to his villa residence. He did not go in, but secreted himself behind some of the shrubs in what the house agent called the front garden, and there in a crouching position watched the passing priest.

The Hindoo came with the same measured tread until he reached the front gate, where he stopped and gazed lengthenly and searchingly at the house. It seemed to Mortimer that he stood thus for several minutes; it was quite a quarter of an hour after the Hindoo's departure before Mortimer summoned up courage to slink away in the direction of the station.

If Mortimer's mental condition had been bad on the Monday, it was simply lamentable on the Tuesday. He couldn't get through his work, he answered questions in the most ridiculous manner, and he went about the office in a way that attracted the attention of everybody. Would the Hindoo attempt to waylay him on his homeward journey? He might fancy that Mortimer was

carrying the ruby about with him for greater safety, and murder him. Or he might enter the house during the day and— And then a terrible thought took possession of Mortimer's mind. Suppose this fiend should murder Nellie?

When this last terrible thought came to him he was wandering during lunch time in a bye-street of the City. He had not attempted to enter a restaurant, he really did not know it was lunch time. He stood still as though struck by a blow, and passed his hand over his forehead. What was to be done?

Thud!

Something struck him violently in the back, and with a cry of horror he staggered forward and fell upon the pavement.

"It's all over with me!" he cried wildly. "Tell Nellie that the priest did it."

"What's the matter with you?" asked a voice.

"Take the dagger out of my back," gasped Mortimer feebly. "It may furnish some clue to the assassins of an innocent man."

Then he felt himself pulled unceremoniously to his feet and found two fellow clerks looking wonderingly at him.

"Look here, Sammy," said one of them, "if I didn't know you were an abstemious man I should think that you'd got 'em. What is the matter with you?"

"Where is the dagger? Has it made much of a wound?" asked Samuel trying to feel the small of his back with his right hand, at the same time nearly dislocating his neck in an effort to catch a glimpse of the dagger.

"Here, you had better go home," remarked one of the clerks decisively. "You must be ill. I only slapped you on the back. Charlie you see him into the train and I'll explain to the chief."

Mrs. Mortimer's surprise and anxiety at herhusband's early return, and his strange appearance, may be imagined. She would have sent for the doctor, but Samuel declined to allow her, and, in the end, in order to satisfy her, he made a clean breast of the secret that was rendering his life miserable.

Mrs. Mortimer was, as she expressed it, "all of a flutter" She was convinced, equally with her husband that murder would be the end of it, unless the stone were restored to its rightful owner. They discussed the method of this restoration, and decided that if the Hindoo priest passed that way on the following morning, the gem should be handed to him; otherwise they would insert a discreet advertisement in the agony column of a popular daily. It never occurred to them that the Hindoo priest might not be a constant reader of that particular newspaper, or of any other; so profoundedly impressed were they with the far-reaching power of those who were tracing the ruby, that such a course seemed quite the proper one to take.

After this they felt more easy, but they took good care that the doors and windows should be well secured. About eight o'clock they were startled by a loud bang at the door; on venturing into the hall, hand in hand, they found that a note had been pushed in through the letter-box.

Tremblingly they returned to the room and read the few lines which were enclosed in the envelope. The message was brief but decisive:

If the ruby was not given up within twenty-four hours their doom was certain.

That settled it; they took it for granted that the Hindoo priest would be at his post on the morrow, and they would then hand the gem over to him. They found a small box with a tight-fitting lid, and in this they placed the ruby, packed in some cotton wool, ready for delivery.

They did not go to bed that night; it would have been useless; so they passed the weary hours of darkness in their chairs in a back room, starting at almost every one of the few sounds of the night hours.

At eight o'clock in the morning Samuel was waiting at the window, box in hand, for the arrival of the dreaded figure. Yes, there he was! With shaking legs Mortimer made his way to the front gate as the Hindoo approached it.

"Here it is!" he cried, hoarsely, as he seized the man's hand and pressed the box into it. His mouth and throat were so parched that he could scarcely utter the words. "It is in there, you'll find it all right. Now go away, for Heaven's sake, and don't track an innocent man like a bloodhound and drive him into his grave. *I* didn't steal it. Take it and go—go!"

Then Samuel staggered back to the hall and promptly fainted on the mat.

* * * * *

A fortnight later Mr. Samuel Mortimer was returning home at the very late hour of ten-thirty, having been detained at the office by work connected with the annual balancing of accounts.

The platform was almost deserted, and as Mortimer felt very tired he sat down on one of the wooden seats to await the coming of his train. Two men strolled along the p atform, and apparently not having observed him in his dark corner, stopped near him and began to talk.

"And how did you manage to get hold of it again?" asked one.

"It was the biggest joke in the world," returned the other with a laugh. "You know that I was hunting for Jimmy Millins, who took it out of my pocket when I had had a little drop, the day after we made that haul in Chester Square. Jimmy is a novice and doesn't properly know where to get rid of these things, so I guessed that if I could track him quickly I could have it all right.

"Well, I was riding in the train one night and I overheard two City clerks talking about a ruby. The partition of the compartments only went half way to the roof of the carriage, you see. Of course, I pricked up my ears and I found that Jimmy had sold it to one of them for two pounds. Then they went on talking about a romance of a stone being stolen from a Hindoo temple—you know the idea—and I found that the one who had got the ruby was a bit scared at the idea of being tracked by Hindoo priests, and it suddenly struck me that that would be an easy way of getting it back without running any risks, and at the same time it would teach that fellow not to buy stolen goods in the street.

"So I followed the fellow home, and togged up as a Hindoo priest—I've done a little stage work in my time—and I just scared the life out of him, and one night I pushed a threatening letter into his letter box."

"Did it work?"

"I should think it did! The fellow came out to me the next morning as I passed his house as usual, and fairly begged me to take it."

Both men laughed heartily, and at that moment the engine came puffing into the station. The speakers entered a smoking carriage, while poor Mortimer, half-mad with mortification and rage, forgot himself until it was too late and had to wait for the next train.

Geo. Day.

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Concerning Kronstadt's Stolen Plans.

THE three o'clock bugle rang out clearly through the grim fortress.

It was an ordinary occurrence, yet Vladimir Strongoneff started guiltily as the brazen note rang out on the early morning air and feverishly flung a piêce of blotting-paper over a plan lying on the table.

Starting to his feet he glanced at the door; it was still closed. Unsatisfied, he flung it open and stepped out into the broad stone-flagged corridor; it was deserted. He walked to the end where a window was set in deep masonry, and through which the first streaks of dawn were breaking, to see if any one had crept down the corridor leading to the magazine.

He was apparently the only officer abroad at that early hour.

"*Batchouscha*, this traitor's work makes a rare coward of me," he exclaimed, re-entering his room. "Since I have mapped out this fortress for that infernal Von Virchow, not one moment's peace have I known. *Ei! Ei!* It has come to a pretty pass that I, heir to a princedom and a lieutenant in the Emperor's body guard, should sell the plans of Kronstadt to a spy of Bismarck."

The sun had risen before he retired to rest, and not many hours had elapsed before there came a sharp rap at the door, and a man, clad in a long dark blue military cloak, entered without awaiting permission.

"In the Tsar's name," he said briefly.

A cold sweat of apprehension burst out on the guilty man's face, as he started up in his bed.

"My business is with Count Vladimir Strongoneff, lieutenant in the Imperial Guard."

"I am he!" said Strongoneff.

The soldier approached the bed, tendering an envelope bearing the imperial seal.

Hastily tearing it open he read the following:

TO THE BOYARD, COUNT VLADIMIR STRONGONEFF,
LIEUTENANT IN THE IMPERIAL GUARDS,
KRONSTADT.

You are commanded to present yourself at the Palace to-day (Friday) at 8. p.m.

ALEXANDER, T.

Strongoneff perused the epistle three times, unable to determine whether the letter contained a veiled menace, or was prompted by an utterly inexplicable friendly impulse.

One thing was evident, the royal command could not be disobeyed.

"I will be ready in an hour," said Strongoneff briefly. "What is the hour?"

"Twelve, Count!"

The messenger saluted and left the room.

Strongoneff's sensation was not an enviable one as he rose and commenced to dress. He racked his fevered brain to discover a tangible reason for the Tsar's unexpected summons and failed.

Was his theft of the fortress' plans discovered, and was he called to St. Petersburg simply to be handed over to the police as a spy, and as such to be sent to Siberia?

The idea chilled him, but he dismissed the thought the next instant as puerile. Had there been a prospect of his being sent to the mines, he argued, a file of soldiers would have paid him a visit instead of an unannounced messenger.

Still, despite this encouraging argument, a vague, undefinable unrest possessed him as he crammed the fatal papers into his bosom and descended to the landing stage where a boat was in readiness to convey him to the capital.

On arriving at St. Petersburg, the messenger hailed a carriage which was waiting their arrival and told the driver to drive to the Palace.

"Why to the Palace?" asked Strongoneff, paling; "I am not due till eight."

"My orders were to take you there, Count," replied the messenger.

The vague unrest began to assume definite shape, Strongoneff realised the danger he ran in carrying such damning evidence of his treachery on his person, as the stolen plans of Kronstadt.

One thought was uppermost in his mind as he alighted at the Palace, and that was, the fatal plans must be destroyed as soon as possible.

"Prince Paul Fédor is awaiting you, Count," remarked the messenger, preceding Strongoneff into the Palace.

"Awaiting me?" echoed Strongoneff surprised.

"He has challenged you to a game of bezique," remarked the messenger. "Hearing four days ago, whilst visiting Kronstadt, that you were the most expert player in Petersburg, his Excellency decided to match his skill against your invincible play. The Lieutenant Count

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"Vladimir Strongoneff," he cried, as flinging open a door, he ushered the Count into Prince Fédor's presence.

"Or rather Prince Vladimir Strongoneff, since your cousin is dead, eh, your Excellency," said Fédor genially, rising from a baize table to greet him.

"I was unaware of my cousin's decease, Excellency," said Strongoneff, with a start of surprise.

"Then I am the first to congratulate you," Fédor cried gaily. "Will you kindly take a seat at the table, Prince? I am anxious to pit my luck against yours."

"You do me too much honour," replied Strongoneff courteously, bowing to the assembled notabilities who had risen to greet him on his entrance.

The young lieutenant seated himself at the table like one in a dream. What could it all mean, this informal ushering into so select a circle. Was it the prelude to a disaster in which Siberia would figure largely?

Strongoneff played well, though his thoughts were far from the game.

Fédor lost gamely, and a peculiar smile flitted every now and again across his handsome face as he glanced ever and anon at the fleeting hours registered on the clock dial.

Six at last rang out from the ormulu timepiece on the mantel and Strongoneff rose.

"May I beg you to excuse me from further play, your Excellency?" said Strongoneff. "I must attend to a business letter I have to write, before I see the Emperor at eight."

"My dear Prince," cried Fédor, "I cannot hear of such a thing! You dine with me! Oh, I insist! I brook no denial, and as to a business letter, I can supply you with everything needful for the writing of same."

And so saying, Fédor linked his arm familiarly through that of Strongoneff and led him off to his apartments in the Palace.

It was impossible to get rid of the incriminating documents.

"There is my escritoire at your service," exclaimed Fédor, opening it. "Write your letter, my friend, and I will smoke a cigarette."

Strongoneff heartily reviled Fédor.

"Thanks," said he, with forced geniality. "I have altered my mind, my business is not so pressing that it cannot afford to wait."

"Bravo!" cried Fédor cheerily. "Bravo! dinner will not be kept waiting after all."

The unhappy lieutenant smiled with sickly geniality in acquiescence, one thought uppermost in his mind, he must rid himself of the Kronstadt plans before he had audience with the Emperor, yet the task seemed an impossible one with Fédor sticking to him with leech-like pertinacity.

The dinner dragged horribly, the clock dial indicating ten minutes to eight as he rose from the table.

"Ah!" cried Fédor gaily, "the hour for your audience with the Emperor is nigh now, eh, friend?"

"Yes, Prince, very close now," replied Strongoneff, a glimmer of hope darting athwart his brain. "So I will say adieu."

Three minutes, he argued, would be sufficient to destroy the plans which would send him to Siberia, if discovered on his person.

"Adieu, dear Prince?" echoed Fédor wonderingly. "Not adieu, for I am going to the Imperial apartment as well, so will accompany your Excellency."

Strongoneff's smiling face effectually concealed the the tempest of baffled passion, raging within his breast.

Fédor's conversation was particularly brilliant as the two strolled down the long corridor towards the Imperial apartments. Strongoneff's was dull and for the most part vacuous, which was not surprising considering the fear which possessed him.

The unreasoning terror which possessed him changed to panic, as the Chamberlain ushered him into the presence of the Tsar, and General Miglehoff, chief of the Secret Police.

"You will pardon me, my dear General," said Alexander courteously, "if I ask you to leave me alone with Prince Strongoneff," bowing to acknowledge the guilty man's salutation. "I have to speak privately with his Excellency."

"Certainly, sire," replied the General, bowing. "Am I to conclude that the audience is at an end?"

"No, General," answered Alexander with a smile. "Kindly return in a quarter of an hour."

Miglehoff bowed and moved towards the door.

"Ah, and General, have you left the prison pass I asked you for?"

Strongoneff grew ghastly pale on hearing the words.

"Yes, sire, it is to your left on the table."

"Ah! how stupid of me!" said Alexander, taking it up. "It is, I see, all in order, General."

"Yes, sire, it only needs the name of the person."

The next moment Miglehoff had gone, leaving Strongoneff almost dead with apprehension.

Siberia, writ in large letters, seemed to stretch across his horizon, he realised, to his horror, that he could not deny his guilt, for proofs which would have condemned him a thousand times were within his tunic.

"I am pleased to see you, Prince Strongoneff," said Alexander, as soon as alone.

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The young lieutenant stammered out some unintelligible answer.

"Kindly take a seat, Prince"—Alexander indicated a chair—"and I will explain to you the reason why I summoned you to Petersburg. Your Excellency was doubtless surprised to receive the summons?"

"I confess that I was puzzled, sire," replied Strongoneff uneasily, seating himself.

"The reason was," said Alexander evenly, "that I imagined that you might be able to throw some light on a circumstance which has recently occurred."

Strongoneff glanced searchingly at the Emperor, who, leaning over the table, was scanning the prison order which he held.

"If I can, I shall be only too pleased to do so, sire," he said slowly.

A slight smile curled Alexander's lips.

"As you are from Kronstadt, you doubtless know to what I refer."

Strongoneff's face grew ashy as he heard the remark.

"I must still plead ignorance, sire," he said hoarsely, glancing almost appealingly at the stern face of his Emperor.

"Allow me to tell you then, Prince," said Alexander coldly, laying the order carefully in front of him on the table, "the plans of the fortress of Kronstadt have been stolen!"

"Impossible, sir!"

"There is no impossibility about it, your Excellency," replied the Tsar irritably. "They have been stolen! Can you throw any light on the affair, Prince?"

Alexander glanced scrutinisingly at the young lieutenant.

"I—I cannot, sire! Your news comes as a revelation to me."

"Indeed!" remarked Alexander placidly. "Well, I will continue the story. The plans were stolen for Count von Virchow, the German Ambassador, by a lieutenant in the Imperial Guard—You appear unwell, Prince," exclaimed the Emperor with assumed concern.

"It is only a spasm of the heart, sire. See—I—I am already better."

"That is well. I was wondering, your Excellency, if you considered Saghalien sufficient punishment for such treachery," remarked the Tsar, once more taking up the prison order.

"The mines!" ejaculated Strongoneff, starting to his feet. "Oh, Heaven! Not that!"

"You evince a strange interest in the fate of this lieutenant," said Alexander coldly. "I consider that he merits death."

"Sire," replied Strongoneff falteringly; "perhaps pressure was brought to bear on this—this lieutenant. We know not what prompted him to give—those plans to Germany."

"They have not yet been given," cried Alexander, "the traitor still holds them."

Strongoneff's face grew pallid with fear, and he swayed as he stood.

"I beseech your Majesty to tell me my fate," he cried hoarsely; "and to cease thus playing with me."

"You confess to your infamy?" cried Alexander, rising in his turn.

"I have no other course open, sire," said Strongoneff, hoarsely; "still, I will make what reparation I can in giving to your Majesty the plans which have worked my ruin."

He opened his tunic and presented the packet to the Tsar.

"I had expected to hear you say that you had repented your treachery," said Alexander, "that you had brought them on your person purposely, so as to be able to present them to me."

"I have not descended so low as to try and palliate my crime by a lie," replied Strongoneff, flushing.

"You had intended to give these to von Virchow today?"

"Yes, sire."

Alexander paced up and down the room for a few moments, then coming to a halt before the lieutenant, said:

"Prince, you are truthful to almost indiscretion's point, and by your own mouth have destroyed every plea for mercy that I was likely to mentally advance in your favour. Have you any reason to advance why I should not write your name—one of the noblest in Russia by the way—on that prison order and thus condemn you for life to the mines of Saghalien?"

"None, sire," replied Strongoneff in a low voice. "The sentence is but just."

The Tsar once more resumed his walk.

"Did you," said he, "desire to sell these plans to von Virchow, as a pure money-making concern?"

"No, sire."

"Kindly explain then, Prince, why you did so—I command you."

"I owed von Virchow one hundred thousand roubles," replied Strongoneff hoarsely. "He pressed for payment and threatened an exposure as I could not meet it. Such a course of action meant ruin and dismissal from the Army. He offered me as an alternative, the obtaining of the plans of Kronstadt, as a liquidation of the debt, and I, coward that I was, accepted to conceal a lesser shame by incurring a greater."

The Tsar went to an escritoire and opened a drawer.

"You are, I believe, engaged to the Countess Olga Murwona?"

Strongoneff's face worked convulsively.

"Yes, sire!" said he hoarsely.

"She is a beautiful girl," remarked Alexander reflectively, rummaging away in the drawer. "It is hard on her, that her *fiancé* will be a felon."

Strongoneff hung his head, clenching his hands till the nails pierced his palms.

"It was a pity, Prince, that you did not think of the

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shame you would bring on her, before you stole Kronstadt's plans," added the Tsar mercilessly.

"It was chiefly for her sake I did it, sire."

"Eh?" exclaimed the Tsar, looking up. "Her sake? Did she, then, know of your course of action?"

"Heaven forbid, sire! It was to spare her the ignominy of seeing me dismissed from the service that I did this."

Alexander drew a small roll of paper from the drawer and, taking up the prison order, went over to Strongoneff.

"Prince," said he with a genial smile, "would you like a cigar?" He picked one off the table and presented it to the amazed lieutenant, then, giving him the order, added: "This will do to light it with."

Strongoneff took the paper like a man in a dream, then reeled like a drunken man.

"Sire," he gasped, falling on one knee, "to burn this mean's pardon."

"Well," said Alexander gaily, "is the thought a displeasing one?"

"Oh, sire—" He ceased to speak, his gratitude being too great for words.

"Come, your Excellency," said the Tsar kindly, laying his hand on the kneeling man's shoulder. "tire not your brain in thinking out thanks, I prefer your presence in Petersburg instead of in the Isle of Saghalein. Come, rise, man!"

"Sire," exclaimed Strongoneff wildly, "this pardon to me is worse than punishment, making me feel my treachery too poignantly. I cannot remain in Petersburg without being in your guards, and I have forfeited that honour."

"You labour under a mistake when you say that you must leave the city," said the Tsar briefly. "I command your Excellency to remain, and if not in the capacity of lieutenant, in that of captain. Hush, say not a word, but take a hundred thousand roubles and pay von Virchow before me now, and forsake the dice lest the cursed cubes bring you to a worse plight than now."

He pressed the little roll of paper he had taken from the drawer into Strongoneff's hand, and taking the order burnt it to ashes in the flame of a taper.

In answer to the Tsar's summons, von Virchow was shown in.

"Your Majesty has done me the honour to summon me," he began, bowing and glancing covertly at Strongoneff.

"Precisely," replied Alexander coldly. "You must leave Russia."

"Leave Russia, sire?"

"Precisely. As an ambassador, you would be honoured. As a spy——"

"Sire! You——"

"Silence!" cried Alexander angrily. "Prince Strongoneff has disclosed your infamy, your base endeavours to make him steal Kronstadt's plans as your base offer to square a gambling debt. His Excellency has refused to sell his country's honour, Count, and in proving you a traitor has left me no option but to bid you to withdraw from the Russian Court. Do not deny your guilt, I have proofs." Tearing open a drawer and pulling out some letters the Tsar said: "Here are some of your communications."

Von Virchow paled.

"Prince Strongoneff is not immaculate, sire," said he icily. "He was to have come to the Embassy to-day with the plans. I have a letter of his to that effect."

"I am aware of that, Count," said the Tsar. "And, it was but a diplomatic ruse to deceive you. As I have the said plans here," taking the packet from the drawer, "it is hardly possible that his Excellency could have done what he said—in the letter."

Von Virchow grew crimson.

"I have been duped, sire," he said coldly. "I presume the audience is at an end?"

"Your perception is excellent," said Alexander, "and kindly fix your departure for the earliest possible date, a month at the outside should be sufficient for making all arrangements necessary—ah, stay, Count, Prince Strongoneff desires to liquidate his debt of honour."

Strongoneff gravely counted out the notes with trembling fingers.

"I am a witness to the payment," said Alexander significantly, as the ambassador bowed himself out of the imperial chamber.

"Sire!" cried Strongoneff dropping on one knee and raising Alexander's hand to his lips impulsively, "words can never express my deep gratitude."

"To make a felon is easy," said the Tsar slowly, "but to gain a friend is difficult, and I think that you will stand beside me in danger, instead of conspiring. Is it not so, Excellency?"

"I will stand by you till death!" cried Strongoneff earnestly.

"I believe you, friend Strongoneff. Rise, and go into the street without fear, for none know the part you once, in error, played save Prince Fédor and myself. Those at the Embassy believe you only acted diplomatically, and if it ever comes out, Petersburg will lionise you. In the *interim*, invite Fédor to dinner, he is a man to be cultivated, and your friend. Adieu! your Excellency, and be prepared to take up your captaincy to-morrow."

Tristam K. Monck.

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BURTON'S BURGLAR.

BURTON is a man with a taste for science and a fondness for dabbling in mechanics that have proved anything but advantageous to him. It was one of the reasons why on this particular night Burton lay alone in his suburban dwelling and counted the slow hours as they were announced from the clock tower in the parish church.

A fortnight before, it had been decided by the Burtons to spend their Easter in their modern little dwelling; but that was when they were still in possession of Rachel. Rachel's one and only failing was a strong disinclination to turning out of bed, and to rectify this serious drawback Burton had added one more electrical contrivance to the many which his ingenious fancy and deft fingers had applied to his household conveniences.

He took the girl's alarm clock and fitted it to an electric bell, so that promptly on the stroke of six it started ringing, and kept up a most infernal clatter until the girl descended to the lower regions and switched it off.

It was an ingenious contrivance, and Burton showed it to me with a becoming modesty but withal a proper pride and satisfaction. Unfortunately the clock was erratic. The first morning it acted beautifully. After that, it fetched the hapless Rachel down at most unseasonable hours, three o'clock one morning, four-fifty the next, and so on; and at the end of the week, when it started just as she was getting into bed, Rachel came down to the sitting-room in wrath and nothing much else and handed in her resignation.

Mrs. Burton was annoyed about it; but there was no moving Rachel, and in the end the family had to go into the country and spend their holiday with relatives rather than stay at home in the company of dish-cloths and cooking operations.

Burton was busy and had to remain over the night; but he had arranged to catch an early train, and the mere fact of one solitary night at home gave him no concern whatever.

Lying there he fell into a train of reflections concerning his latest invention and its shortcomings, which had deprived him of one of the best servants they had had, when his attention was drawn to a stealthy creak of his bedroom door. In the dead stillness of the night it was unmistakable, and Burton, who was facing it, saw it gradually creeping open. If it hadn't been for that he might, he told me afterwards, have precipitated matters by springing out to investigate.

A draught or the cat would have accounted for it, but there was something fascinating about the stealthy, sly creeping of the inanimate woodwork that held him passive.

It seemed a century, but it might not have been more than a couple of minutes, before a man's head was projected into the room, and the owner thereof took a lengthy and cautious survey of the interior before venturing further.

Burton played 'possum, and the intruder, feeling himself secure, entered noiselessly and took further observation. Burton breathed regularly and somewhat loudly, counterfeiting an occasional half-suppressed snore that filled him with overwhelming pride, despite the unpleasantness, not to say danger, of his position. The burglar seemed satisfied at length of his security, and stole across to the dressing-table on which reposed Burton's watch and chain and one or two other articles of adornment of considerable value.

Now, any ordinary man would have sprung out of bed and grappled with the intruder, or would have sacrificed his valuables as the price of his safety, according to his disposition and the relative value he placed upon himself and his possessions. But Burton's ingenious brain indicated a better plan than either, and by the time the uninvited visitor had reached the dressing-table, Burton's hand had stolen out to the side of the bed where a handy little switch connected with a bell outside the door, which served in ordinary times to call up assistance from below stairs to the passing needs of the lady of the house.

As the burglar picked up the watch the bell rang out—a touch and off again. The man at the table dropped the watch and looked round; but there were no signs of waking from the bed and he tried again. Chuckling to himself Burton played a fugue on the bell, timing the music to the operations of the man at the table.

Every time he touched an article the bell rang; and ceased as soon as he dropped it. Burton heard a whispered and somewhat profane commentary from the bewildered intruder. The man withdrew from the table at length and tried to "go through" Burton's pockets instead. But the result was always the same! everything he touched set the bell ringing, and at last with a smothered oath the man concluded to give it up and content himself with anything portable that might be lying about downstairs.

He withdrew as noiselessly as he had come in; and as soon as he was fairly on the stairs Burton sprang out of bed, drew on his socks and trousers, and possessing himself of his revolver which lay ready for use in a drawer in the dressing table, stole after him.

There was another switch in the dining-room, and Burton told me afterwards that it was a positive treat to see that fellow drop a tea-pot which had set all the bells in the house ringing on being moved, and feel carefully round the plate basket for concealed wires before trying to lift so much as the meanest item of its contents.

Of course he couldn't discover any, because there was none to discover. But as soon as a fork or a spoon was lifted, off went that bell again, and the burglar would slam it down and let loose a perfect torrent of profanity. To vary the proceedings a bit, Burton started off a musical box hidden up in the ceiling somewhere and actuated by another switch. Then he lit up a grinning japanese mask with red and green lights, and having reduced his victim to a state of drivelling repentance, he switched on the light and his revolver and told his visitor that he was pleased to see him.

The man didn't reciprocate; but he successfully concealed his true feelings at the sight of that shining

barrel levelled at his head and smiled a sickly smile. He endeavoured to explain that he must have missed his way in the dark and got into the wrong house, a theory which Burton agreed was not absolutely impossible, though rather wanting in one or two essential details that he, as the writer of successful fiction, would have hesitated about inviting the sagacious readers of his efforts to swallow.

The fellow wasn't without pluck, though he had no mind for scientific devilments—that wasn't exactly the way he put it but it sounds better and will serve—and he didn't hanker after risking a shot. There was a cool precision about Burton that somehow convinced him that that revolver was likely to be well served, and if a man has got to do it at all, he can pick oakum better without a hole in his forearm, and the treadmill is decidedly more congenial when one's legs are not perforated by small cartridges fired at close range. So he faced Burton and asked him bluntly what he intended doing about it.

Burton didn't know and he said so frankly. He put the case to his captive.

"Now supposing you were me," said he tentatively. "What should you do?"

The man's eyebrows went up and he smiled slightly.

"That's rather a delicate question," said he. "You see I've got a considerable interest in the matter and my answer would doubtless be, to a certain extent, prejudiced. Let us suppose, on the contrary that you were me, what should you do?"

"Shy something at you (myself that is) unexpectedly and bolt," said Burton promptly.

"Excellent," said the other with a laugh, tossing to the ground a heavy cushion that he had managed to smuggle behind his back. "That's just what I was going to do. Well, if I were you I'd keep a firm finger on that trigger and pull at the slightest motion, postponing explanations till afterwards."

Burton uncocked the revolver and laid it down on the table before him. "You are original," said he. "I think we can dispense with that if you'll give me your word not to use violence until I begin."

"Quite so," said the other. "I always prefer peaceful methods myself. Would you mind telling me how you connected up every single object in your house to an electric bell."

"Not in the least," said Burton. "I didn't."

"Didn't?" queried the other in blank surprise. "Oh, as you like, of course. I thought we were on the open and mutual confession lay."

"True," Burton admitted. "I had my hand on a switch, and whenever you picked up any of my property I pressed it—that's all."

It was really a weak, almost a criminal thing of Burton to do; but men who live out of the ink-pot are never proof against the chance of good "copy." They would sell their grandmothers for a good short story, and swop the whole of their relations and half their friends for a promising serial. Instead of looking after the interests of society, as he should have done, Burton looked after his burglar. Got him cigars actually, and whisky, and water, and sat up with him half the night!

Of course, Burton was on the war-path! He told his guest so frankly, and produced note-book and pencil as evidence of his stern business purposes. Now I myself. am inclined to think that Burton got his leg pretty severely pulled, and the man simply filled him up according to his capacity for swallowing tough and indigestible incident. "If that was so," Burton said, though he by no means granted it, he was sorry he let the man go. He would have kept him as a "ghost" at a pound a week and made his own fortune out of him.

The conversation happened to turn, not unnaturally, on the stages by which Burton's visitor came to adopt his nefarious profession, and without giving himself entirely away it was made abundantly plain that a reckless expenditure and unlawful means of evading the inevitable result had brought a well-educated man of good position and family to the depths in which he was then floundering.

"I got five years for it," said the man, "and being of a cheerful disposition with a tendency to make the best of everything I wasn't long looking round for a chance to improve my circumstances. Fortune favoured me from the first, for soon after I was transferred to the big convict prison station at Dipmoor, I got a chance of clearing out, and I may say without egotism that I have never been found wanting when an opportunity for bettering myself came along.

"It was due to the chaplain, a solemn-faced, well-meaning old file who was unduly fond of private exhortation, especially if a lag showed signs of grace. He was a much older man than myself, but of about the same size and build, and age doesn't count much in a convict prison. It was speedily borne in upon me that there was an advantage in allowing fleeting signs of grace to become apparent, and I spread them out as alluringly as I knew how. His reverence was hooked as easily as a gudgeon, and hour after hour did he spend with me in the dreary cell which had been allotted to me by a kindly and considerate Government. His long prosing and my enforced inactivity were responsible for the brilliant scheme which, when it first occurred to me, fairly staggered me by its audacity.

"It was no less than to persuade his reverence to change states, and to become convict, while I undertook his clerical labours.

"I pondered on the scheme, and the more I thought of it, the more enticing it became. The chief difficulty was with the chaplain, for I was easily persuaded that some very direct and telling argument would be necessary to get the Rev. Solomon Snipes to consent to such a lop-sided bargain. In fact, it was but too evident that I should have to forgo the consent and carry out the metamorphosis, despite his reverence's not unnatural opposition.

"Would the very daring of the trick suffice to carry me through if I did? That was the question that I tormented myself with. I weighed it up carefully from every point of view for close on a month, and then I decided, firstly, that it would, and, secondly, that if it didn't, the risk it entailed was worth running.

"I often wondered afterwards that the intentness of my gaze did not disconcert my visitor, and lead him to suspect that something besides the hope and expectation of leading a worthy, upright, and honourable existence was in my mind as I listened to his platitudes, the fors and againsts and the whole gamut of his beautifully trite little observations on life and its attendant duties, pleasures, and dangers. I was studying my man with more intentness than I had ever paid to any subject before or have since, for now that I was set on the enterprise I was minded to carry it through in a thoroughly artistic manner. Every trick and mannerism of speech and gesture that I could catch up, I practised persistently in the privacy of my

cell, and in due course it seemed to me that short of going into the pulpit and delivering a sermon, I could pose as the Rev. Solomon Snipes before that worthy gentleman's nearest relative.

"I only hoped that the chaplain would prove as cowardly at the push as my observations had inclined me to believe he would. As the sequel proved, he did, fortunately for me, for had he shown fight my scheme would have petered out in its infancy. The chance came on a Tuesday, shortly after the quarry-gangs had left the prison, and those who were left inside had settled down to their less arduous tasks. All the head officials were out of the way, and the warders were chatting and smoking together, and paying only a cursory attention to their duties. My heart thumped against my ribs when his reverence entered the cell; but it was only momentary, and afterwards I was cool and collected again and set with deadly intentness on my purpose.

"We were in the midst of the troubles of the prodigal son—he was the staple theme of the Rev. Solomon's discourses, and precious sick I got of him, too—when I took occasion to broach the matter I had in mind.

"'You will pardon me, sir,' said I, anticipating the veal, 'but I should be mightily obliged by the loan of your togs.'

"The chaplain stared at me in consternation, so that I was obliged to laugh despite the serious position I was constructing for myself.

"'But my good man,' he stuttered, 'what am I to wear?'

"'Mine,' said I briefly. 'Listen! I am a desperate man and I intend to take desperate measures. I don't wish to hurt you, but I might easily kill you and take what I want afterwards.'

"'You can never carry out such a deception,' said he.

"'I am going to try,' said I. 'Once in your covering and you in mine, and a chaplain's word goes a long way, you know. A wretched convict hasn't much chance of a hearing here.'

"The chaplain winced; but I cut short his hesitation, and lifting the stool I counselled silence and a quick performance of my commands.

"It was ludicrous to see that unfortunate cleric hopping about in his bare legs like a sick fowl; but I was ruthless and had his gear, shirt and shoes, even to the very spectacles off his nose, while he hustled into the coarse canvas I had discarded with a celerity lent by a modest bashfulness that was immensely diverting.

"It was mean of me; but for the life of me I couldn't forbear it, and before I left the cell I crammed that prodigal son down the throat of my victim and gave him such exhortations modelled from his own pattern that he must have been positively churlish had he refused to recognise in me a genius wasted to the world and brought low over a misapplication of a wretched penhandle.

"'Johnstone,' said I to the warder, in the regulation clerical snuffle, as I leisurely walked down the corridor; 'you had better look closely to No. 283. I think his mind is becoming weakened by his troubles. He has been trying to convince me that he is a clergyman or something who has been forcibly made to take the place of a convicted prisoner. The poor man was so incoherent that I could not quite make sense of his complaint. Has he ever told you anything of the sort?'

"'No sir,' said Johnstone grinning maliciously. 'They are up to all sorts of dodges, though. Anyhow, I will see if I can't change his impressions for him.'

"'Be gentle, Johnstone,' said I. 'Remember that the unfortunate and the weak should command all the sympathy that we can give them apart from the just performance of our duties.'

"'He shall have it, sir,' said Johnstone, with another detestable grin.

"'So shall you, my fine fellow, if I get half a chance at you,' thought I to myself. The fellow was one of the most brutal bullies of a class that is exceedingly rich in such specimens, and I owed him quite a large measure in the way of retaliation.

"Things went swimmingly with me, though I was really sorry for poor Solomon. As I had calculated, his story was sat upon at the outset. The only one who listened to it at all patiently was the chaplain, and for obvious reasons *his* attention was of very little service to the unfortunate cleric.

"On the Friday morning following the assumption of my new office, pressing business called me to London, and when I got there business equally pressing compelled me to drop out of the profession I had adopted for my own convenience, and the chaplain of Dipmoor Convict Prison was unaccountably missing.

"One of the convicts there was abnormally anxious to fill the *role*, and he even got his complaint through to the higher authorities, and earned bread-and-water and bad words by the ill-advised persistency with which he addressed his superiors."

"Marvellous," said Burton, after a dramatic pause. "And so you actually did obtain your freedom, and the story never came out?"

"Hardly," said the burglar, with a grim smile. "I never was particularly lucky, and on this occasion fortune served me one of the scurviest tricks that it has ever played upon a man.

"Being naturally reduced in my pecuniary resources, I had to take to the only likely source for improving the state of the exchequer, and for the sake of thirty bob and about five pounds worth of property in a wretched two penny ha'penny clerk's house at Clapham, I was nipped by the leg in a window frame, owing to a broken sash-cord, and held there a prisoner until the morning brought assistance and the sequestered gloom of a cell in the local station.

"This was bad; but worse was to follow.

"At Holloway a 'tec had me identified positively as one of a gang who had burgled a wealthy mansion down in Surrey, and had added murder to their gentle craft, having been disturbed by the butler and given him his *quietus* in endeavouring to still his voice.

"On this charge I was committed to the assizes, and bad enough my position was. To hold my tongue meant hanging—or life at the least, and to save myself was to confess that at the time of the crime I was an extremely orderly and well-conditioned inmate of Dipmoor Convict Prison.

"'Poor devil,' said the counsel who was allowed me by a just and fair-dealing court, regarding me with something like compassion. 'Now, look here! If I tell that story you'll be acquitted with a warm time to follow. Suppress it and you'll in all probability get hanged.'

"I elected in favour of the warm time and I got it—five years and—correction laid on strong. Rough, wasn't it?"

"Very," said Burton, compounding a felony and a glass of something; and then, seeing his visitor safely out into the night, he sat down and wrote feverishly until far into the morning.

R. Andom.

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THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

PROLOGUE.

To-day is the Fifth of November, in the year sixteen hundred and sixty, and a rabble of happy, shouting boys, dragging fallen branches across the park towards the village, has reminded me of Guido Fawkes, to whose memory a huge fire is to burn on the green to-night. And it is to be piled the higher since no fire has blazed on this anniversary for years, our pleasant countryside having been in the hands of those who would scarce consider the safety of His Majesty's grandfather a cause for rejoicing. But now that the King has come to his own again, all these customs are receiving more than their wonted observance, and the old village sports are being followed with the keener zest for the rigorous times but lately past. Now, doubtless, His Majesty will find many to inquire into all his adventures in the troubulous times, at last happily over, and eager to write them down for the benefit of posterity. But as for mine, if I do not write them down myself, they are like to go unrecorded. Therefore, having settled my affairs in running order, I am seated on this day of leisure in my own room at Butley Croft, with a fair manuscript book before me, in which I intend to set forth the manner in which I have spent the spring of this year.

By-the-way, my talk of the King puts me upon one caution which ought fairly to be given. I do but speak of him as a loyal subject, and in his Restoration I had neither art nor part. If anyone supposes that he will hear of secrets of State-craft, or fancies that I was privy to the designs of George Monk, and familiar with the plans which were hatched under my Lord Clarendon's peruke, he may as well read no further. My adventures, for the most part, took place among wild and desolate hills, and, being within two days' ride of my native Worcestershire, yet I seemed to travel in time as well as space, for certainly I was carried into the midst of a state of society such as cannot have existed among us for hundreds of years. But if you will, you shall hear.

CHAPTER I.

How I Fared on The Road.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh of February last I rode out of Knighton, on the borders of Salop and Radnor, towards Rhayader, on the further side of Radnorshire. I was not greatly apprehensive of pursuit, for, on leaving Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, I had ridden north-east nearly as far as Shrewsbury, then had turned and ran back almost parallel on my track, making the last part of my journey chiefly by night, and following unfrequented roads.

This I could do pretty easily, for I had a good notion of the general lie of the country. I was now making directly across the borders and heading for the heart of Wales, where I had an expectation of finding a sure refuge. Soon after entering upon a road which I was told would lead me direct to the town of Rhyader, it became very rough and uneven, rising and falling over smaller hills, while far before me, low and purple, rose loftier mountains. I travelled at a moderate pace, for I was desirous of sparing my good mare, Whitesock, she being unaccustomed to such roads underfoot, and her comfort as dear to me as my own.

Near midday, for the sun was hardly at the zenith, I came to a small inn where several roads met. Here I rested a couple of hours, baited my mare, and refreshed myself, though with no great relish, for the bread was dirty and showed signs that the mice had the run of the flour sack, and the rest of the provender was to match.

In the afternoon I entered on a stretch of rolling country, mostly heath and furze, the road, a mere track, splitting into a dozen where there was a bad patch to cross, and every traveller had followed his own judgment.

Up to this point the way had been quite solitary, but on

breasting a gentle rise I saw, some half-mile in front and ascending the next slope, a tiny cavalcade—two women riding on ponies, a led pony, and a man on foot. They were going at a walk and I reined in to a walk also. Perhaps these people would turn aside soon and leave me the road to myself. But, just as they reached the crest of the hill, something frightened the led pony. Making a bound like a cat, the active little creature tore the halter from the hand of the man who was leading it, turned, and came down the hill like a greyhound, the heavy saddle-bags with which it was loaded bumping and flapping against its sides and increasing at once its terror and its speed.

The two women wheeled their ponies and gave instant chase. But the fugitive had less to carry and a good start, and showed them a clean pair of heels. I resolved to stop it as it came up the hill where the ascent would blow it, but in the bottom it turned to the open heath and fled, whinnying with delight, over the turf.

Touching Whitesock with my heel, I rode at an angle with its course, and was soon up with it. But it was no easy thing to catch. It dodged, twisted, doubled like a hare, showed as many tricks as a fox, and, finally, seeing there was no escape, trotted back to the nearer rider as if it had been a tame lamb.

I knew the nature of the little beast well. It was not the first time by many that I had seen the wonderful cunning and cleverness of a Welsh mountain pony, for every spring the dealers come with droves of them to our market town. The nearer horsewoman now gave me a volley of words which proved pure Hebrew to me, showing at the same time her white teeth in a broad smile, which shone all over her freckled face.

It was clearly the Welsh tongue which she was speaking, and as I had no Welsh to answer her, I could but nod and smile back. When she saw that I had not her language she said, "Well, thank you, indeed!" but so oddly and stiffly was it spoken, that I had much pains to recognise the familiar words. I made her a proper reply, then cantered back to the highway.

The second rider had taken a somewhat different direction, and I did not approach her. As I regained the road the man hastened up—a queer, tall, old fellow, clad in well-worn, greasy homespun, and carrying a long carbine over his shoulder.

The sight of this weapon brought to my mind what I had heard about the disturbed condition of this part of the country, and, as I rode slowly up the hill, I drew the chargers from my pistols and reloaded them.

For some two or three miles the way remained solitary, then, at a turn of the road where it wound among thickets of hazel, and bramble, and holly, I was accosted by a young woman standing in the middle of the track. Whitesock was walking, for the going was very bad, and as I came slowly through the slough to the dry spot where the young woman stood, the latter rolled her big, black eyes at me roguishly, and smiled, and kissed her hand.

She was a strapping lass of twenty, maybe, in a bright red petticoat and bodice, the latter leaving her bosom half bare. By her appearance I judged her to be an Egyptian.

"Noble captain," she said, with a caressing smile, "I am a country maid living about five mile beyond here. I have walked a long way, and am weary. Won't you—oh, won't you?—take me up behind you, and carry me a little distance on my road?"

I eyed her warily to be sure that she was a woman, for queer things often befall lonely travellers in these unsettled days. But a woman she was, and one also who thought that her smile and bright eye had pleaded her cause well with me. She took my silence for consent, and advanced to lay her hand on the pommel. Whitesock received a hint, given so that no one might observe it, but which she well understood, and she sprang half-a-dozen feet sideways from the scarlet figure.

"Have a care, my girl," said I, "how you approach my mare! I should not wish to see you suffer either by her teeth or heels."

"She is one of that sort, is she?" said the Egyptian. "Well, noble captain, stay with me and we'll walk gently together, and beguile our way with pleasant speech."

We had now gained the hard road, and I gave another secret sign to my good mare, who broke at once into a hard gallop. I was anxious to be clear of the thicket, for I knew very well she was not alone, and that some plan had gone amiss I was well assured by the foul oaths and outcries which the pretended simple country lass poured after me. I had gone a mile again when a thought flashed into my mind, instantly flashing through my rein, and bringing Whitesock to a stand.

What of the travellers whose pony I had stopped?

What force was with the Egyptian?

To this day I can never understand what power it was that drew my rein and sent me back instantly to see what might hap with them. As I trotted along I mapped out in my mind the country I had recently traversed. It is a gift

Carrying a long carbine over his shoulder.

which is native to me, and which, often and again, has stood me in great stead. It matters not where I go, if it be by daylight, and I can make the lie of the land; it sits in my mind as if pricked out on a chart, I cannot claim any merit in it for it costs me no trouble. It is as natural to me as to breathe or sleep.

As I ran over my course, I saw that the road looped like a bow, and that if I crossed the heath as if marching along the string I should hit the track a little before the thicket where the Egyptian waylaid me.

The heath was dotted with huge clumps of small trees and brushwood, and I took a glance from behind each one which lay in my path to be sure that the country was clear before me.

As I drew nearer to the point for which I was making, I came down from the saddle and led Whitesock, first grasping her nostrils with my hand, holding them shut for an instant, and then caressing her a little. After this, which she understands as well as if she spoke the King's English and I could converse with her, I knew she would not neigh or make the slightest sound.

Creeping thus, I reached a clump of brambles from which I judged the track should be in sight. Nor was I wrong. Peering cautiously through a thin place my eye raked a stretch of road, and there, credit me, was my Egptian dancing a saraband on the crown of the causeway, while three smarthy ruffians lay on the bank. Two were lying idly, the third slapping his leg and snapping his fingers in time to the girl's twinkling feet and flying petticoats.

A moving figure beyond caught my eye and I saw a fourth man come round the bend and run nimbly towards them. My glance was off the group for barely a second but when I looked again the girl was alone. The runner came up, spoke a few words to the Egyptian, then vanished into cover, and the scarlet figure flung itself on the bank where her companion had been lying. Some three or four minutes passed, then the bunch of ponies and travellers came in sight. As they approached, the Egyptian began to groan heartily as one in sore sickness or distress. I held my post and watched, for I did not wish to interfere unless absolute need should arise. Meanwhile the riders came on and the Egyptian groaned.

When they were close upon her the figure upon the bank feigned to be conscious for the first time of their presence. Half raising herself, she held out her arms with an imploring gesture, then fell back. The ponies were stayed opposite, and at a word from one of the riders, the tall man with the carbine gave up the rein of the led pony and went to the Egyptian.

As he came up to her she crouched lower on the ground. He spoke to her and bent over her. With the speed of thought, she turned and flung a slip-noose over his head. The rope, instantly tautened by an accomplice on the other side of the thicket, ran tight about his neck, and with a strangling cry, he pitched forward on his face. I sprang to the saddle, and, sword in hand, drove Whitesock forward at the gallop, for the real cry of distress had been a signal for the four men to spring from their ambush, and the little party was surrounded.

But as I rode forward, I shouted with delight to see what happened. The two women at bay turned on their attackers with all the courage of Amazons. One leapt from her pony and flew to the fallen man, and I saw the shine of a knife in her hands. With one deft blow she severed the choking cord, and, before the Egyptian could turn to escape, and with a single swift turn of the wrist, slashed the decoy hussey clean across her naked bosom.

I brought my sword down like lightning.

The Egyptian fled, screaming, the flowing blood darkening her scarlet bodice. The other rider sat her pony steadily, and discharged two pistols at the foe. These were both fired at the two men behind who were the nearer assailants.

The two in front, amazed to find Whitesock sweeping down on them like a thunderbolt, nevertheless dodged nimbly to the one side, and swung their hangers in readiness. Both eyed me as coolly as possible, one on either hand. I saw their intention at once. Whichever drew my stroke, the other would leap in and endeavour to hamstring the mare.

Now, I had as lieve they should hamstring me as Whitesock, and so I feinted the left-hand rogue, who jumped back, and then brought my sword down like lightning on the right hand fellow as he sprang in. The blade took him fairly across the skull, but his hat was stiffened with some pieces of metal, for I felt that the sword did not bite.

The force of the blow drove him headlong to the ground and his hanger fell harmless.

I drew rein and Whitesock came to a stand within a yard of the ponies. I looked round, but our fight was fought. The footpads had not bargained for this, and they hastened to beat a retreat. Three of them vanished at once, one carrying a couple of slugs in his shoulder from the second pistol, the fourth, whom I had cut down, regaining his senses after a few moments and staggering into the bushes.

At a nearer view, I saw the horsewomen were both girls. That is to say, the one with the bloody knife in her hand certainly was, and the other, though she kept her face closely muffled in the cape of her grey cloak, I judged to be much of the same age. They were clad in thick country homespun, new and warm, and looked like farmers' daughters in their holiday attire.

"We are much indebted to you, sir," said the one who had remained in the saddle in a low, clear, pleasant voice, "and thank you heartily for your help."

"You are very welcome," said I, "though indeed I think you are very capable of defending yourselves."

"We had shot our bok, I fear," she returned, "and Siani's knife would have availed but little against swords."

For myself, I looked upon Siani with interest. She

brought to mind the Welsh women of whom I had read in the histories, the women whose long knives were as dreadful as the swords of the warriors. She was a short, stout girl, squarely planted on her feet, her eye bright with the fire of danger and battle, gripping her knife like a dagger, nor was it unlike a dagger, having a blade six inches long, two fingers broad, and the end slightly curved, and whetted to a very keen edge.

"The Egyptian," said I, "will have to cover her bosom for the future, or be for ever inventing lies of how she came by that scar."

At this moment the bodyguard sat up, and began rubbing his throat. Dismounting, I looked at his neck, and found that the rope had left a purple mark, and, had it not been for that timely stroke of the knife, he would have marched no more in attendance on damsels. His carbine was gone. It had doubtless been carried off by the ambush who had been placed there to tug on the cord.

In a few minutes he was ready to march, and off we moved, for the cover was so thick that had one of them returned with the stolen gun, he might have marked us down at thirty yards with perfect safety to himself. A few minutes brought us to the open, and, a mile further, I perceived that my company was no longer a necessity to them. Houses and farms began to come into sight, and I determined to push forward.

"Do you know the country running north-westwards from Rhayader through the hills?" said I to the girl, who spoke English.

"I do," she replied.

"How lucky," said I, "I wish to travel in that direction. Are the roads good?"

"There are none," said she, "but mountain tracks."

"Could a stranger find his way by them?"

"It would be very difficult. A guide is necessary."

"It is a thing I should be glad to do without," I returned. "I am not anxious to leave any more traces to show which way I have gone than I can help."

She took the hint at once, and inclined her head slightly.

"You are quite safe in our hands," she said.

I now took my leave and rode on.

So far I had kept the path easily from the directions with which the saddler had furnished me, and when I resumed my journey, and had gone nearly two hours march from my halting place, I saw before me, on a ridge against the sky, the first human habitation I had met for many, many miles.

I was now riding up beside a mountain brook, which ran swiftly through the glen, leaping and boiling down a succession of tiny terraces of rock. It was swollen with rain, but the downpour had not been recent, for the first muddy flush had run off, and the torrent was clearly darkly brown.

As I neared the shepherd's cottage the ascent became easier, and wide patches of smooth grass land began to spread out on both sides of the stream. Opposite the house, but on the further bank, I saw a child playing—a boy of perhaps six or seven years old. He saw me at the same moment, and at the sight of a stranger, bolted for the house like a rabbit for its burrow.

The only bridge was a slender trunk thrown across the stream, and half way he slipped and fell. Springing down, I ran to the bank following a well-marked track which I was just crossing, and which led, as I expected, to a ford. Here, the stream ran across a level belt of living rock, without a bubble or swirl.

It was my first experience of such a brook, and I never dreamed of the terrible force hid in that twelve-inch race of flying water. The child was now within half-a-dozen yards of where I stood, and I leapt into the middle of the stream. Of the next few minutes I have the most confused idea. I know that my feet failed to touch the bottom, but at once were swept from under me, and down I went, whirling and floundering to a pool below, to find both myself and

I leapt into the middle of the stream.

the child floating in a back water, and a mountain ash sweeping my face.

As I was now in some three feet of fairly quiet water, and had in some wonderful fashion shot through the whirling eddies between the rocks without a single blow, I swung the little boy on the bank and climbed after him. As I blinked the water out of my eyes, I saw a swiftly running figure bearing down on us, a woman, in short ragged petticoats, and, by the way she hugged and kissed the child, who had escaped as luckily as myself, I judged her to be the mother.

She poured forth to me a flood of language of which I understood no single word, to her great surprise, as she showed plainly when she discovered that I was English. When she saw me wringing the water from my clothes, she pointed to the house and pulled my coat.

We were reduced to signs, as I have read of merchant adventurers among savages, but plain and common wants are easily understood, and I stepped away briskly towards the fire to which she invited me.

Whitesock was standing just where I had left her, and I saw her safe under cover of a shed before I entered the house.

The latter was of the modest and simplest construction, built of rough, unshapen stones, their chinks plastered with mud, and roofed with a thatch of rushes. But inside, at one end of the house was a great turf fire glowing redly on the hearth, the smoke escaping through a hole above.

The shepherd's wife drew a stool to the fire and fairly thrust me down upon it, talking all the while with nervous energy, and patting me every now and then, and pressing my arm as if she could not make enough of me. There seemed no sign of anyone about the house but herself and

the child who had placed himself on the other side of the fire, and, within a moment, the steam began to rise from both of us in clouds.

The woman, bustling about with great activity, placed a small table at my side, loaded it with what she had, a barley loaf, a cheese, a pitcher of milk, and a wooden dish containing a food which I had never seen before, but have since found it to be a very nourishing preparation of oatmeal, called in their tongue *nwd*.

With many words of which I knew not one, but also with many striking and expressive gestures which, being the language of nature and the heart, I understood very well, she begged of me to accept the best that she could offer.

I made shift to thank her in the same manner, and fell to without delay, for the mountain air sharpens the appetite. With much natural delicacy she busied herself about other matters while I ate, yet glancing from time to time to see if she could mark any want which she had the means of supplying.

When I had finished my meal I was still loth to start, for I was by no means dry, and the wind would be keen after sitting by this noble fire. My hostess had disappeared carrying a huge pitcher, and, as I suppose, about some household task, when I heard the rattle of hoofs on a stony patch near the house. I looked up, and as I did so a head thrust itself into the patch of sky commanded by the little window. The latter was a mere hole in the wall, unglazed, and closed at night by a wooden shutter, now hanging back.

The head was that of a man of thirty-five to forty years of age, with fiery red hair, moustaches, and beard. His eye was blue-grey, and bright and hard as a falcon's; his nose was slightly hooked, his mouth shut like a spring-trap. But it was more the general expression of his features which impressed me than any special point among them.

His face was purely Roman in its outline. My grandfather, who was curious in such matters, formed at Butley Croft a collection of ancient coins, and often to my delight, he had shown me the contents of his cabinet, and told me the stories connected with them. This fellow's face might have been struck from one of those old Roman medals.

Twelve hundred years and more had passed since that great conquering race had left our island, and yet here was their impress, stamped as strongly and freshly as if this man had marched with sword and shield and pilum under the shadow of the eagle standard. I had ample time to make my observations, for the horseman remained perfectly still, his eye fixed as if watching the far distance.

Then he started forward, and paused again before the open door. He was riding a small pony of the mountain breed, and, dismounting, he tied his reins to a wooden peg fastened in the wall, then entered the house without ceremony. He was a tall, straight fellow, six feet high at least, spare, and sinewy. He advanced directly to the fire and spread his hands to the warmth.

There was but little light in the house, and the flame had died out of the turf, leaving it a reddy glow, so that he could not distinguish me clearly. Seeing someone, he greeted me in the language of the country, and I made a return in English. He turned sharply upon me.

"You are an Englishman?"

"Certainly I am," said I.

He dragged a stool up to the other side of the fire and set himself to examine me. He looked me over from top to toe, and every moment with increasing disfavour. The very hair upon him seemed to bristle with anger, and his eye shone fiercely in the firelight. This was beyond my comprehension, since I had never set eyes upon him before.

"You are not a common man after ponies and sheep?" said he at last; "you are a gentleman. I know it by your fine clothes." To this I had nothing to say, and again his eye worked over my riding suit of blue and silver.

"For what are you coming to this country, and from where do you come, and what is your name?" he demanded.

As I was not accustomed to be examined in this fashion by a fellow in a tattered grey doublet and greasy leathern breeches I made no reply. I did not wish to enter upon any quarrel, for it might be the husband of my kind hostess, and in any case I did not desire a brawl in the house where I had been hospitably received. Some one came in at the door, and I looked round, but it was not the woman, it was the little boy who had been outside to stare at the pony. Now, he came to my side of the hearth, and stood gaping, open-eyed at my companion. The latter took no notice whatever of the child, and was clearly a stranger. Further, he could hardly be a peaceful shepherd, for a heavy broadsword dangled at his belt.

His unreasonable and puzzling wrath was mounting higher and higher; his features worked convulsively, and strange animal noises whistled and groaned through his clenched teeth. Suddenly he gave a most startling yell.

"Oh, the filthy English!" he cried. "Oh, the dirty thieves, the black English!"

Now, I could contain myself no longer, but burst, almost without knowing it, into a hearty shout of laughter. His yell had caused me to start sharply, so piercing and sudden was it, and my disturbed feelings gave themselves vent in the merriment.

My laugh was drowned in the shrill tirade which burst from him—curses, as I should suppose—but not a word could I understand.

The child slipped out of the place with a frightened look. I turned to the fire with a composed face, and the outburst stopped dead in mid career. He had, it is likely, just remembered that his words contained no weight for me. He returned to his old song.

"The dirty English," he said, slowly and bitterly, "they killed a cousin to me."

"Then, sir," said I, "'twas with a rope for a guinea."

A snarl of rage told that I had hit in the clout.

"And dirty thieves," he screamed,

I smiled at his fury. He leapt to his feet. I hitched my sword hilt handy.

"Just now," he cried. "Oh, yes, just soon for that. But, first, first, my handsome English gentleman, look at that."

He strode to the door, which had fallen to, flung it back and stood, drawn to his full height and pointing out.

"There is not a week," he continued in a quieter voice, "since I was going by Hereford and up towards Shrewsbury, and I saw the rich fields and the fine country that my fathers owned once, and I said to myself that the English are the great thieves of the world. I have hated them always for it, and I will never hold back to speak in the face of anyone of them about it. Look here."

He threw out his hand with a stately gesture. I looked, and saw a waste of low, rolling hills, weary in the grey February afternoon, bleached near at hand with the whitening bents, ribs of nalsed rock thrust up through the bare, starved soil, and poverty and famine writ large upon the scene.

"Why," said I, "this is a ripping up of old sores to an extreme. If we are to quarrel about a conflict of our ancestors of a thousand years agone, one never need run short of a bone to pick. The thing was put to the arbitrament of the sword, and there's an end to it. The Saxons beat the Welsh, and then the Normans beat the Saxons. Faith, it's turn and turn about."

"You say that," he cried, his eyes sparkling—"you say that you can beat the Welsh. Here I am, beat me."

"You are giving my words a twist which does not belong to them," said I, thinking the fellow was beside himself, and wishing to be free of him.

"Come," he said. "Here we are, we two. We will play

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out this old quarrel. Take your sword and follow me to the grass outside."

For answer I turned to the fire. He took up a switch which lay on the floor, where the little boy had dropped it, and advanced towards me.

"I swear," said he solemnly, "that if you do not follow

She leapt upon my opponent.

me at once, I will cut you across the face with this little stick where you sit."

I was on my feet at a flash.

"It is well," said he, with an ugly smile. "I am a good judge of a man's eye. I was quite sure I had not much more to do."

CHAPTER II.

A Fight for My Life.

He reached outside and I followed. Since he was so bent upon it, we would exchange a few passes. Certainly, I did not feel inclined to escape on the terms offered.

He threw down his doublet and I stripped off my riding coat. He placed himself in position and flourished his heavy sword about his head as if waving a bulrush.

In height and reach we were fairly matched and, as our swords clashed together, I forgot his mean appearance, and whether he were entitled to the honours of the duello, and only tasted the keen joy of the play, offence and defence, of the two shining points.

I crossed swords with the intention of disarming my opponent as soon as possible, but in a moment my easy confidence vanished. Ragged shirt and leathern breeches, notwithstanding, I had met with a master of fence. At the outset, I tried upon him a pass which had never failed me. He knew the only possible return and played it perfectly, and I barely saved my wrist. My confidence, as I have said, vanished in one minute. In two, I was strictly on the defensive. In three, I was fighting for my life.

"Come," said he, holding me at distance easily, and speaking in a quiet, pleasant tone, "come, now, give me the word that I am the best man, and you shall go without any danger."

For the last dozen passes I had been on the defensive, but, as he dropped back on making this offer, I rushed in on him and attempted to burst through his guard at all hazards. That the trick was a mad one I knew well enough but it was the only one left me.

I sent him back a full yard before he regained his command of the play, and then he set his teeth, and with a wild yell, drove at me in deadly earnest. Once, twice I turned aside the darting steel, but it was as much as I could do to answer those swift, dreadful thrusts.

He was my master, and the best man, sure enough; I knew it now, but to confess it was another matter, and I fought doggedly on, my only object being to stave off the inevitable end as long as possible.

Suddenly a clatter of flying clogs broke out on our left. It was someone running swiftly down the stony road, but I had neither the time nor inclination to turn my head. We had first crossed swords on a level patch a few yards from a bank, the crest of which sloped on upwards, but we had now worked close in, and in another moment my hostess appeared on the rise above us.

Without checking herself, she leapt upon my opponent from above, dropping squarely upon his shoulders, and instantly winding her bare, powerful arms about his neck. Under her weight, and the impetus of her flying leap, striking him as she did like a stone from a catapult, my enemy had no chance at all.

Down he crashed, and the pair of them rolled in a tangle at my feet. For my part, I slapped my sword home, and placed my hands behind me.

Amid a fearful clatter of tongues from both of the fallen he sprang to his feet and scrambled round for the sword which had flown from his hand.

"Come again," he cried, menacing me with his weapon.

"Or perhaps you have had enough?"

"Why, as to that," returned I; "if I had been inclined to take advantage of chances, you would have had much more than enough."

"It is very true," he rejoined, dropping his point; "you could have done me much mischief when I was on the ground. What is on this woman?"

The woman had never ceased to ply her tongue busily, and now something she said drew his fixed attention.

I returned at once to the house, for I was shivering bitterly I was still far from comfortably dry, and the chill wind struck through and through me. I put on my coat and drew my seat still nearer to the glowing turf. In a short time my antagonist and the woman came in.

"Well, well," he cried, spreading out his hands. "Yes, she iss right—the woman iss right; she iss thinking of what you have done for the little boy, and it iss natural that she should have for you a strong and tender feeling. If I had known that before I should never say bad words to you and try for a quarrel—oh! no, never at all."

"Say no more," said I; "all's well that ends well."

My hostess came and patted my shoulder, and I pressed her hand; we could not talk together, but for all that we were at no loss to come to an understanding. She now heaped on fresh fuel—light, woody turf, which caught instantly, and threw up leaping blue flames; and the good pleasant warmth ran through my blood like a cordial.

My antagonist seated himself and fell into a reverie, brooding over his side of the fire. The woman swung over it a huge iron pot half full of water, and began very slowly to pour in oatmeal, stirring all the while, and for a time there was silence. Then he looked up.

"Yes," said he, "the love of the mother for the child. It is the strongest of them all. I have just been trying to remember some verses I have made upon the subject."

So he makes verses, does he, thought I, this unkempt tattered fellow whose sword play is so dreadful, and I eyed him with wonder and curiosity, knowing then but little of the Welsh.

He remained silent for a moment, stroking his beard, and then began to recite. Understanding none of the words, I observed the more exactly the musical flow of his low, mellow voice. His speech was, of a truth, rhythmic. It flowed and flowed as smoothly as a slow river over sand, with barely a trace of the harsh gutturals so prominent in their conversations.

My hostess stirred her porridge slower and slower, then stopped, wooden spoon in hand, and listened, her face set in rapt attention towards the speaker. That his subject was a moving one I judged by his low, pathetic utterance, and the tender pity which shone in the bright, dark eyes of the listening woman. His voice died away softly, and she sighed, and returned to her porridge.

"The verses," said he to me, "are upon the death of a little boy, a child to my sister. She had only the one and was much troubled to lose him, so I made the song to comfort her. Indeed, now, she knows it better than I do. I am saying in it that she would rather hear his voice than the song of the mountain brook after rain, that he loved a little bow and a wooden sword, and to play in the white sand, and how he ran to hide his face against her side from the bwbach. What is bwbach in English?" he asked.

"How can I tell," said I. "You must explain a little."

"Well, perhaps some man shall dress himself in a strange fashion, and black his face, and go about to make a joke, that is it."

"Why," said I "bogey, or some such word as that, we should say in English."

"Ay, ay," he returned, "it is a poor language, the English, I should think, to make poetry in. The words are so stiff."

I laughed, but did not enter upon any argument.

At this moment two or three deep musical twangs, as of a harp rang into and through the house. I turned my head and saw standing in the doorway a figure of a boy.

It came forward and revealed the face and head of a man. It was an elfish-looking dwarf, scarcely four feet high, a ragged, barefooted fellow, holding in his hand a small harp, from which he continued to pluck low, deep notes.

His head was bare, covered only by a mat of dull, red hair which fell over his face, and from among it small, fierce eyes gleamed darkly. He smiled upon my companion and stared hard at me. I heard a loud choking sound at my elbow, and turned to see my hostess with a white face and big frightened eyes looking from one to the other of the last comers. Her bosom rose and swelled as if with dreadful apprehension, when it happened that the swordsman turned and observed her.

He raised his hand and spoke to her eagerly and rapidly in a low, caressing tone. In another instant she regained command of herself and began once more to be busy with the food, but eagerly, and fearfully, her easy, unhasting mood quite departed. The dwarf seated himself, unbidden, his harp resting upon his knee.

"People seem to walk in and out of this place as freely as if it were an inn," said I.

"Oh, yes; why not?" said the tall man, carelessly. "Everywhere on the hills you can sit by the fire, and eat something when you pass a house. It is the custom with us. Now, in England, they would put a dog to tear your clothes and bite you if you walked straight to the fire."

"Oh, no," said I; "the English are not so bad as that."

"It has happened to me, indeed," he replied, "and more than once. Here, everyone passing would come into this house and take a rest or something like that."

As if in proof of his words, the latch clicked again, and the door opened. This time I knew the figure which stood on the threshold, for all that she was muffled high.

"They are coming my road again," I thought.

My hostess slipped down the room swiftly, pressed the grey figure backwards into the thick dust that was gathering, and swung the door to after them. At a sharp word the dwarf flung his harp to the poet, went up the wall like a cat, and vanished through the hole which served as window.

"What's the reason of all this?" said I.

"Indeed, I do not know," said the tall man, gently running his fingers over the harp and drawing out soft, sweet notes. Then he strode into a bold lively air, playing loudly, and singing as he played.

"You have two ideas in this, my friend," thought I. "First to persuade people that you and the harper are both here; the one singing, and the other playing; second, to avoid conversation with me."

A slight scraping on the wall drew my eyes to the window, and in came the red head of the dwarf. His eye flashed with malicious glee full on my companion, and he sprang down into the room and leapt for his stool. He seated himself, seized the harp, and continued the air without the slightest pause. Under cover of the strumming and singing he said a few words to my companion, but I could not catch them, nor should I have been any the wiser if I had.

Without further ceremony, the tall man fetched a bowl from a shelf on the further side of the cottage, took the wooden ladle from the woman's hand, and began to help himself from the pot. She seemed to expostulate as if begging him to wait a little, but he laughed and began to eat rapidly.

His companion at once provided for himself in a similar manner, and the scalding porridge disappeared down their throats at a wonderful rate. In less than ten minutes they had devoured a huge bowlful each, and then they prepared for departure. I rose also, and the bard looked at me with surprise.

"I thought you are stopping here for the night," he said.

"Not at all," said I; "I intend to put up at an inn which I understand lies eight miles ahead, straight along this road."

"But you had better stop here, being so wet."

"I am dry enough now," I returned, "and further, I have a dry cloak which I threw off before entering the water. Which way are you going?"

"Oh, I am going that way," he said.

"Then we will travel together."

"Yes, yes," he said, but with no great heartiness.

Upon signs of my starting with her visitors, the woman had run for Whitesock, and now led her to the door

(To be continued.)

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DASTARDLY HANDIWORK.

I HAD not seen Professor Dom for months when I entered his laboratory the other day and found him up to his ears in a series of new experiments, the nature of which were a Chinese puzzle to me.

But the courteous old scientist soon became frankly communicative.

"What is this gelatine, you ask?" said he. "A new idea of my own. A new benefit to the human race, especially in the fly season. Those are the germ seeds of human hair. It is an old joke to say that some hair-washes would make hair grow on a billiard-ball. But the jokes of the scoffers of one generation become the scientific realities of the next. I affirm that it is not impossible to make an ivory billiard-ball grow a beard. It can be done."

"But what is the practical utility of your invention?"

"Why, no man and no woman need be bald. My plan is infallible. No hair-wash, no blistering preparation, but the actual sowing within the scalp of the hair seeds which you see there. It is a tickling process, but not painful. Not half so painful as dentistry."

"And those hair seeds?"

"Are all taken from the heads of hirsute and robust people. There is male and female hair, hair of all shades, but carefully assorted. I can grow a crop of any desired colour."

"How do you sow the seed?"

"See this scarifier? This is run over the head of the bald individual, and the seed is then 'creamed' in with a chemical lather of my own. The lather is allowed to dry in till it disappears, and the whole operation is done."

"Have you ever tried it on a man?"

"Not yet. But there is a bald-headed gentleman coming here this morning—in fact, he is here now. He has agreed to let me experiment on his scalp, and he has agreed to pay me handsomely if I am successful, as I certainly shall be. Is that the bell? I will descend to the door and usher him in."

* * * * *

Professor Dom left the room. What unfortunate curiosity impelled me to inspect the gelatines microscopically? I was very careful with them, too, but I ought to have left things alone.

* * * * *

Professor Dom re-entered with a fat, apoplectic, bald man, who perspired profusely and breathed like a locomotive.

"This is Mr. Shinetoft, the gentleman who has agreed to try my experiment. He desires golden hair, and I've no doubt he'll be dreadfully giddy by the time I've done with him. Be seated, Mr. Shinetoft."

The Professor went straight to work. First of all, he washed Shinetoft's head in lukewarm water, then passed the scarifier over the scalp, the apoplectic old gentleman the while venting sighs like the blasts of a foghorn. Next he "creamed" in the seeds with a yel owish lather of a most unpleasing odour; then he placed the bare-headed old gentleman in the sun to dry. The whole operation did not take longer than a quarter of an hour.

"Now we've finished," said the Professor enthusiastically. "As soon as the 'creaming' disappears you can return home, Mr. Shinetoft, and you'll come and see me to-morrow morning."

* * * * *

Next morning a cab drove hurriedly up to the door, then there was a tremendous clatter, and an apoplectic apparition of rage burst violently into the laboratory without removing his hat.

"You hoary-headed, blue-spectacled, swindling old scoundrel!" roared Shinetoft—for it was he—"look at your dastardly handiwork," and Shinetoft removed his hat.

Golden hair, brown hair, black hair, grey hair, carroty hair, white hair, long lady's hair, stiff, beardy hair—all sorts of hair standing spikily on guard and dazzling the vision until the eyes detected green and blue hair amongst the rainbows that lifted their tips angrily outwards.

With a bellow like a wounded mastiff, Shinetoft sprang at me as I lay kicking on the sofa, and pitched me clean out on the gravelled path in the back garden.

When I came back he was gone, and Professor Dom had gone to sleep with his head jammed into a pneumatic trough, while a number of loose detonators were keeping up a fusillade, and threatening to convert the laboratory into a flaming firework display.

"I can't think how the various sorts of hairseeds got so mixed together," said Professor Dom. "I had them all sorted separately."

I might have enlightened him, but I didn't. And the microscope was as mum as I was.

£1,000 FOR YOU!

£25 FOR A NEWSAGENT OR BOOKSTALL CLERK. £5 FOR EACH OF THE BOOKSTALL BOYS. £50 FOR WITNESSES.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtain this copy of *S. S.*, to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25**, and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for bookstall boys, and the £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

The addresses of the five witnesses must be written in full. If, however, they are all of the same town, it will be sufficient if the sentence, "All of Bradford, or Liverpool, or Glasgow," as the case may be, is written on the margin

It is necessary for each coupon sent in by one competitor to bear five signatures, but the same five people may sign as many coupons as they like. It is not necessary for each competitor to find a fresh set of witnesses for each coupon. Competitors may sign for one another.

There is no objection to rubber stamps being used in place of signatures.

Coupons from PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES, M. A. P., PASTIMES, SUNDAY READER, BIG BUDGET, and PICK-ME-UP are all available in this competition.

You may keep all the coupons and send them in to reach here by the closing day if you wish.

The coupons belonging to each separate competitor must be inclosed in one envelope or parcel. Two or three competitors may not send in together.

The prize will be awarded to the competitor whose two figures are correct or most nearly correct. For example, if the correct figures are 7,000 and 3,000 respectively, the competitor whose forecasts are 6,999 and 2,999 will take precedence over the competitor whose forecasts are, say, 7,000 and 2,997 respectively.

All correspondence regarding this competition must be addressed to The Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and NOT marked BIRTHS. Only envelopes containing coupons should be marked in this way.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....

2. .....

3. .....

4. .....

5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "PASTIMES," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," and "M. A. P."

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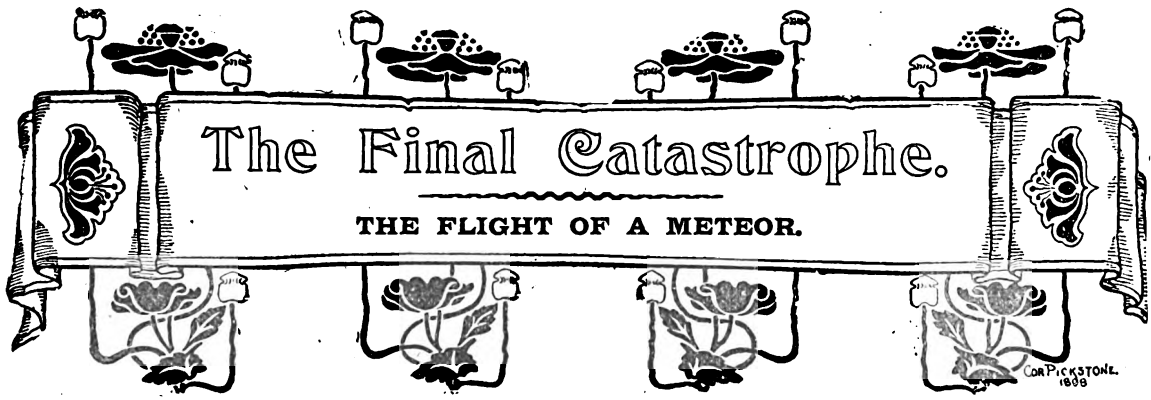
The Final Catastrophe.

THE FLIGHT OF A METEOR.



It was a hot night, and the air in the dome of the observatory was stifling. Wearied with long gazing into the immeasurable sun-deeps of the wonderful region of the Milky Way around Sagittarius, I leant back in the observing chair, and fell to meditating on the momentum of the universe.

I recalled the various calculations and demonstrations of Helmholtz, Thompson, Croll, and others. I was thrilled by the thought of the awful power stored up in those crowds of stars at which I had just been looking. I knew that, motionless as they appeared, they were all speeding with tremendous velocity in many directions, and that an astronomer who, a million years hence, should look for these star swarms would either not find them, or would see them scattered over other regions and grouped into new constellations.

Then I thought of the innumerable dark bodies which modern investigations have led us to believe must people space; extinguished suns, or, it may be, hugh primal masses, still spinning with the original impulse imparted by the hand of the Creator, and not yet fired by the heat of impact into sun and world and life-generating nebulæ.

I reflected on the inevitable consequences of a collision occurring between two masses, and the flash of a meteor just then darting past the opening in the dome, and lighting up for an instant the polished tube of the telescope, reminded me how the earth has thousands of collisions every day with minute bodies that it encounters in space, but which, thanks to its airy shield, do no harm to the frail beings that swarm upon its surface.

"There would be a very different story told," I said half aloud, "if the earth should ever happen to run against a chunk of creation as big as itself instead of these insignificant nodules of iron and nickle."

As I thought this I glanced down a deep and singular looking valley at the head of which I was standing. I have never seen anything so splendid in the way of human achievement as that which now met my eyes. The valley being as a narrow gorge, overhung by dark trees, at the foot of the rock under my feet. It sloped steeply and widened rapidly, and half a mile below it came a broad plain, edged by sunlit hills. This plain and the slopes of the hills were covered with a city. Gold, silver, and polished marble in domes, spires, facades, battlements, and lattices without number glittered and glowed in the sunshine.

A man stood at my side, seven feet tall, magnificently formed, dressed most richly in a kind of wine-coloured velvet, with a round cap of the same, ornamented with diamond buttons. He had large round eyes and a curiously inquiring countenance that reminded me of a picture I had seen of Diogenes with his lantern.

"It's the city of the Great Ellipse," he said. "This the sunshine of Alderbaran. You notice how rich is its tone, not really red, yet almost a rose tint. You don't get that kind of light from your sun."

"No," I replied, with an indescribable feeling of being obliged to make a humiliating confession. "In the pale white beams of our sun that great dome yonder plated with gold merely appears dazzling and gaudy, but look at it here!"

The play of light on it was wonderful; manifestly a golden reflection, yet strange beyond description.

"Are you not surprised to see gold here?" my companion asked.

"Not at all," I said. "The spectroscope satisfied us long ago that we should meet with familiar substances throughout the universe."

We began to go down into the city. Every step was a revelation of fresh magnificence. The streets and buildings and the dress of the inhabitants in the smallest details were entirely worthy of the splendour of the city as it had appeared from a distance.

The spoils of all the empires of the earth would not have furnished out the decorations of this wonderful town. And enveloping and beautifying everything was the rich light of Alderbaran, which produced the extraordinary impression of being streaked with rose tints, as if the whole atmosphere were filled with etherealised apple blossoms.

I noticed that the inhabitants, who smiled and bowed at us on all hands, took a constant delight in this sunshine, and their eyes opened wide in it like the nostrils of one who catches a faint perfume.

"The precious metals must be exceedingly common in your hills," I remarked.

"No," was the reply, "we have to go far and mine deep for them."

"And sometimes fight for them," I suggested.

"No," answered my companion with a smile. "We have no war. The whole planet is occupied by a single race, constituting one nation. Our only rivalries are in the study of nature and the enrichment of our surroundings. Our chief intellectual pleasure is in the development of the sciences. Our ruler is our greatest mathematician. Upon his death another is elected. the sole qualification being that he shall have excelled all other men in mathematical achievement. Our present ruler has immortalized his name by inventing a perfectly general solution of the Problem of Three Bodies. Oh, it is beautiful! In a hundred days I could give you an inkling of it."

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"I wonder if Newton, and Laplace, and Lagrange will soon find this planet?" I said to myself. "I wish they could."

My companion continued: "This is called the City of the Ellipse, because many thousands of years ago, when our race was just emerging from barbarism, a mathematical genius, whose name is now inscribed on every temple of science on the planet, discovered the properties of that wonderful figure, and its relation to the motions of celestial bodies. With hewn stones, a marvellous work for his time, he constructed on the summit of the hill yonder an ellipse whose major axis is half a mile in length.

"The great figure has been carefully preserved to this day, and the stones composing it have been plated thick with gold. All the space within the curve is paved with lapislazuli, and each focus is marked with an immense diamond. The huge white marble building that you see stands at the intersection of the transverse and conjugate axis, and contains the college of the Mathematics."

We visited the college. In one of the rooms a microscope was shown to me, and I was informed that with it the ultimate atoms of matter could be seen.

I looked at them, and was wonder-struck by their maze of ceaseless motion.

At night they directed me to place my eye to a great telescope that was pointed upon a faint star, and I instantly recognised our own solar system.

Jupiter with his belts, Saturn with his rings were familiar to my eyes.

I saw the earth attended by the moon, oh, so far off; the sense of their remoteness was oppressive, and yet I could not mistake them.

They changed the eye-piece, and then I saw the bare object glass of my own telescope glimmering dimly in the starlight through the narrow opening in the observatory dome where I had left it pointed at the sky. A curious passage in that remarkable little book, "The Stars and the Earth" occurred to me:

The rays of sight diverge from the eye so that a very small body close to it fills up the interval between two such rays, while at a greater distance a much larger body is necessary to fill up the proportionately increased space between them. If we hold up a shilling at arm's length before our eyes we may completely conceal the sun with it.

If, on the contrary, an organ of vision was constructed in such a manner that the rays proceeded in parallel lines, every object would appear in proportion to every other, and of its own proper size without reference to the distance between it and the eye.

We certainly should not see distant bodies entire, but only such small portions of them as are proportionate to the size of the organ of vision constructed after this fashion; but this little portion would be visible with equal clearness at every distance, and a blade of grass upon the most distant star could not escape our sight, provided the atmosphere was clear.

Yet I could by no means understand how a similar effect had been produced with this telescope, and I felt instinctively that it would be hopeless to inquire.

"In all our researches amid the universe of worlds," said my companion, as we were walking again in the town, "we have never been able to find any indication that there exists a mortal race equal to our own in science. We have traced with absolute certainty the history of the evolution of the planetary system of which our splendid sun is the centre. We have calculated, according to the laws of probability, that the chance of our being destroyed by a collision between Alderbaran and one of the dark bodies of space is almost infinitesimally small, and yet we know with mathematical certainty that that chance exists, and in some mysterious way that knowledge has produced a most profound spiritual impression upon the race.

"Have you not noticed a certain underlying sadness in us all? It is the shadow of the Last Catastrophe that lies upon our souls, do what we will to banish it. I sometimes think there is a fate in it that defies the laws of chance. Do you see that symbol, a licking flame, shaped in gold, surmounting the dome of the great College? Well, look about you; it is everywhere reproduced in the ornaments of windows and doors and columns. The very children," he cried with sudden excitement, clasping his hands, "make figures of the Destroying Flame in their play!"

I shuddered when my attention was thus called to the universal presence of this awful symbol. It stared at me now from a thousand places where I had not recognised it before. The ruddy sunshine, which had before seemed so productive of unspeakable beauty, now appeared to me fierce and ominous. The omnipresent symbol quickly became a torment to my nerves. I could not escape it, with its polished gold tongues flashing blood-red reflections, and I could not endure it. Oh! to get away from this doomed world!

I turned in a fever of terror to ask my companion what I should do. But, with a sudden exclamation of "The Signal!" he had vanished from my side. We had been walking in a broad street that led up the hill to the Ellipse, and presently I saw him running at the top towards the College. With trembling knees I struggled up the ascent. The weight of Fate seemed bearing me down. I hated the gorgeous town, and trembled at the sight of it. Alderbaran followed me with hot and malevolent beams.

When I had stumbled to the brow of the hill I saw my friend's face in the door of the marble college. It was as white as paper, and his great eyes stared out of it like two circles of charcoal. He beckoned to me, and with a desperate bound I was at his side and sheltered in the shadow of the doorway.

"It is coming!" he gasped. "Look here," and he pulled me into a room where several very grave-looking gray-haired men were leaning over a table on which was spread a large sheet of paper filled with mathematical diagrams. They looked up as we entered and, parting, made room for us beside the table.

"Let the stranger look," said one of the old men. He pointed to a diagram representing the orbit of a planet, and surrrounded with figures which I perceived must be geometrical representations of calculations involving the perturbing influence of a number of attracting bodies.

"Our refined method of analysis," said the aged mathematician, "enabled us to calculate with the utmost accuracy the motions of all bodies constituting our planetary system. We can tell about the absolute place of any one of those bodies within the thousandth part of a second arc. For many centuries the utmost acute observer has been unable to detect the slightest variation from our tables. Quite recently, however, startling evidences of variation have manifested themselves. Our own planet was found to be the twentieth part of a second in advance of its calculated place in its orbit. It was conclusively proved that the tables could not be in error, and further observations demonstrated that the disturbing force which had introduced these beginnings of disorder in the system was becoming greater.

"No doubt now remained that some body of great mass was approaching out of the abyss of space. It was easy to find its position in the sky which is shown upon

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this diagram. But its mass, distance, velocity, and direction of motion was not so easily ascertained.

"We closely approximated to them, but anxiously awaited the moment when the body should have approached sufficiently near to become visible by the reflected light of our sun in order to make the observations needed to give us more exact information.

"A signal was arranged to be displayed from the college as soon as the discovery should be made. That event occurred a little before daybreak this morning, and the preconcerted signal has brought all the most celebrated mathematicians and astronomers here in hot haste as fast as it has caught their eyes."

"But the most startling thing," broke in my friend, "is that the single hour during which the body was seen this morning sufficed to show that it is moving towards Aldebaran, and with frightful velocity. The Catastrophe is upon us."

Events now shaped themselves rapidly amid a whirl of excitement. When the truth was known the city roared like a stricken beast.

Choked with ever-increasing multitudes, its long glittering streets flung upon the flanks of the hills were in ceaseless motion, like the arms of some wounded monster vainly striving to crawl away. Blazing under the red orb of day, glimmering in the starlight, I saw days and nights pass over the doomed town as swiftly as the checkers of sunshine and shadow fly over a meadow.

Later observations brought out a most startling fact, which the astronomers had at first overlooked. The gigantic meteor was moving straight towards Aldebaran but the planet we were on was swinging in its orbit with a velocity, and in a direction, which would certainly place it exactly in the path of that Juggernaut of space. It would run down the planet before it met the sun and involve the whole system in a common ruin.

Its weight, the mathematicians ascertained, was an octillion of tons, 500,000 times as heavy as the doomed planet. Its velocity, owing to some enormous initial impulse, would be nearly 400 miles in a second at the instant that it struck us. I undertook to calculate for myself the amount and intensity of the heat that would be developed by the shock, but sick at heart, I dropped my pencil. It was enough to know that we should all vanish in a whiff of smoke. It would be the torment of hell, but only for a second.

In the meantime the astronomers coolly studied the approaching body with their telescopes. I myself felt the liveliest curiosity concerning this mysterious, nonluminous, monstrous mass which, it was perfectly certain, from the velocity with which it moved, possessed an impulse that could never have been derived from the ordinary effects of gravitation. Here, perhaps, was one of those primal bodies, about which we had speculated on the earth, containing locked up in its simple energy of motion all the potencies of solar and planetary development.

Who could guess how many millions of years it had been flying on its unerring course, seeking some gigantic mate that by their fiery union its imprisoned forces might be set free? And now, at last, its supreme crisis was at hand, and the birth of this new star was to involve the destruction of a system of worlds and the extinguishment of a whole race of intellectual beings.

For a day or two before the end it was evident that our planet had been dragged completely out of its orbit by the tremendous attractions of the meteor, and was rapidly plunging towards the latter as if hastening to meet its doom. Gradually the vast hulk, which glowed in the midnight sky with a lurid reflection of the light of Aldebaran, producing a ghastly illumination of the landscape, began to manifest in its appearance the effects of its approach to a solar centre.

Phenomena resembling those displayed by a comet on nearing the sun were exhibited, but on a prodigious scale. We could see that a monstrous tail streamed out into space behind the body, but as it extended nearly straight away from us, it was barely visible through foreshortening.

The meteor, though still forty or fifty million miles distant, covered a space on the sky many times larger than the full moon, and a more frightful object the imagination could not conceive. Its colour was fiery red, and its light blotted out the stars. It was surrounded by great flames and fiery streamers that were blown back on all sides as if by a mighty wind. The planet, though torn from its orbit, still continued to rotate upon its axis, and so the awful spectre rose and set opposite to the sun, and every succeeding night the immense increase in its apparent size demonstrated the fearful rapidity of its approach. It expanded from hour to hour before the eyes of the horrified spectators. It seemed to swallow up the heavens.

When half a million miles away it filled the whole sky, blood-red, smoking, blazing with the fury of electricity and caloric. We knew we had but twenty minutes more. I cotld feel the great frame of the planet tremble as it madly leaped to the embrace. The heat was insufferable The fearful attraction was sucking the atmosphere away and we gasped for breath. Lightning fell in sheets and streams. Gigantic whirlwinds arose, and great areas of the marble and golden city were swept up and scattered like leaves on the bosom of the storm.

But, oh, the noise! The roar and howl and shriek of the tormented elements.

It split my very brain, and yet above or through it all I could hear the wail of a million tongues, the last despairing, awful cry of a whole race perishing at one stroke.

While I stood stupefied, there came a universal crash as if the dome of the firmament had fallen, and instantly there burst, withering through the air, a blast of heat before which the smoking hills melted like snow, and whirled into blazing clouds of mineral vapour.

Seared with torture I was caught up like a cinder in a whirlwind of fire and then the mouth of Hades seemed opening under me.

Down I dropped through the spot where the city had stood, through the smoke of the vanished planet, and instantly emerging beheld afar off, the earth beaming in the quiet starlight.

"I shall fall home," I thought, but glancing back I saw the mighty meteor, aflame with its fearful spoil, thundering after me.

In a second it was upon me again.

"Help! Help! Oh, Heaven!" I shrieked, and all consciousness left me.

I opened my eyes as a little breeze breathed through the dome, and I saw the Milk Dipper glowing softly in the radiance of the galaxy.

"Bless my soul," I exclaimed, rousing myself. "If I fall to dreaming like this, I shall have to give up astronomy." George C. Wallis.

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FROM BACKWOODS AND PRAIRIE.

I.—THE MAN HUNT.

We were all glad in the stage-coach when two passengers got out at Sarron. The coach had been carrying three men on a seat, and for the last eight miles the two San Ramon passengers had been sitting in the laps of the others, turn and turn about.

It had seemed to me that my turn with the stout man had been unfairly protracted, and with him on my knees I had begun to understand something of the discomfort of a cattle-truck. I was particularly unhappy when the big wheel on my side jumped into a rut or banged against a stone.

My fellow man and brother is all very well at his proper distance, and I can venerate him there, but when he crowds me he is only a bag of live meat.

The wild mountain-side with its brave army of straight pines meant something for me when the burden was off, and as I straightened out my stiffened legs, the loud-talking stream that ran along our dusty way spoke up to some purpose. I was alive again.

The driver seemed jollier, too. He plucked from the sides of trees letters that had been visible only to his eyes, letters stuck to twigs or bark by the rustics, and he joked about this youth's tender missive to that maiden, and so on, for he knew all the people up there in the mountains, and all their affairs and affections.

We made a wild dash down a red hill, whose sides were gashed by the road, and spattered the water in the shallow brook at the bottom. Then we were submerged in the gloom of a grove of thick growing redwoods that made a high-vaulted roof for the road and shut out all but the merest streaks of sunlight. It was chilly in there and sinister—just a bit ghostly and gruesome, too—and there was an odour of rotting leaves.

We made a sharp turn round a big black stump, and the lead horses jumped in fright to the left. For there was a spectral figure standing in the deepest shadow behind the stump—the slight, bent form of an old woman.

"Ah, Mrs. Chapman! Going to take a trip?" asked the driver, pulling up.

"Yes," shrilled out the high, thin voice of the apparition. "Going down to Covelo."

"Get in, then. Plenty of room, ain't there, boys?" And he laughed as if the joke were against us, which it was.

She seemed a bit dismayed as she looked inside from the step, to which one of the outside men had helped her.

"Seems rather crowded," she said, "but I can squeeze in somewhere."

Surely enough, her lean figure fitted into a little corner, and she sat there as composed as she might have sat in her own chair. She was dressed in deepest black, and wore an ancient black bonnet. Her face was one of extreme sadness.

I looked out of the coach window as we started again and saw the house where she lived. It was a black little affair, with its crumbling roof and weather-stained sides. It stood out of plumb, as if bowing to the big black stump. The poor habitation looked as if it had never known morning or noon, but always the twilight of the redwood deeps, to which the darkness of night is merely one of degree.

"Lived there long?" asked the passenger who had made most interrogations along the way. Though curious, he was a sympathetic man, and with the question went a tone of pity.

"Yes, eleven years; alone most of the time, too. It's a good cool place in hot weather."

The woman did not even seem to like to talk, but shrank into herself and kept her sharp, pale face turned aside, while her eyes went low. I knew a story belonged to that face.

Two miles were soon rattled off, and we came to Covelo and sunshine, for we were well out of the redwoods. The old woman was helped down, and three other passengers got out. A big farmer shook hands with the woman when she alighted, and said something to her that brought over her face what was possibly meant for a smile. Then the farmer clumped into the stage in a large, lumbering way, and we rattled out of Covelo.

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The new-comer seemed to know nearly all the people in the coach.

"So you picked up Mrs. Chapman coming down? She's a good old soul, isn't she? But she has a strange history."

"What's her story?" I asked. "I know it must be as good as Maupassant."

"Don't know the gentleman, but it's a good one, right enough," said the big passenger, who seemed to be a man of parts, though he smoked a very bad cigar.

"She came to the woods before they had a sign of anything at Covelo or San Ramon either. I expect it was long before any of you thought about coming here. She's a remarkable woman, gentlemen, and no mistake.

"You see, she and her husband came to this district and took up a timber claim about a dozen years ago. The husband died, but she had a boy left, a young man about twenty, I should say. She thought the world and all of that boy. He was a bit rough, like many others then.

"Lloyd Chapman could handle an axe with the best man in the woods, and he was liked by everybody. His mother was very proud of him. Young as he was, though, he had that old-man look that comes so early to wood-choppers.

"There came a time when I had to do some prevaricating on Lloyd's account. You see, he began running down to the town and over to Pike's place, to have a spree, and he'd do this nearly every week. So, when Mrs. Chapman would ask me, with a worn, sitting-up-late look on her face, if I'd seen Lloyd, I'd always tell her something to ease her mind, saying he'd got an extra job of woodhauling up some other district, or something of that sort.

"She didn't know the boy drank, and he had sense enough not to come home until he was sober. But it hurt me to see him going on that way. And so, one day, I just stopped him where I met him on the road and talked to him like a Dutch Uncle.

"'You've got to stop it at once, young man,' I said. 'You'll wind up by breaking your old mother's heart if you don't. Besides, I'm not going to shield you for always.'

"I think I can be eloquent when there's any great occasion for it; and I felt this to be the real occasion. So I was uncommonly eloquent. My words reached him.

"'Well, I'll leave off,' said he, striking his side with that big hand of his. 'I'll swear off from this minute.'

"'That's good,' I said, and drove on, with my pride in my eloquence swelling up like water in an artesian well.

"Not very long after that, Lloyd went over Orimbo way, where he got a job at the big lime kilns. They were all fine fellows over at the kilns—all except one, Joe Kendrick. He was just about Lloyd's age and looked like Lloyd a good deal—same colour of hair and eyes, and just about Lloyd's build. The two young fellows got quite chummy, went to live in the same cabin, and were always seen together about the kilns.

"Just about that time a girl came into the camp—the foreman's daughter—Jess Raymond. They say Jess was an exceedingly pretty girl, and had eyes that were quite fascinating.

"Lloyd and Joe fell so deep in love with her that neither of them knew which end he was standing on half the time. She seemed to favour Lloyd more than anybody else at the camp, but Joe was in the race and meant to win. Joe thought he was the favourite, so he pulled himself together and asked her to marry him. Jess was very sorry, but she was promised to Lloyd.

"That was enough. Joe was wild. He left the cabin wouldn't speak to Lloyd again, and went about with a black look for everybody. He drank very heavily, too, and talked a good deal about shooting. I happened to be at the camp just then and before I went home I told Lloyd to keep his eyes open and his pistol handy. But it was like talking to the wind. He wasn't afraid of anybody.

"'It would be a good time to take a run down to the redwoods and see your mother,' I said. 'She must be very lonely there. She hasn't seen you for more than a month, you know, and you used to be home nearly all the time.'

"'Oh, you want me to run away from Joe, don't you? I'm no turn-tail,' said he with fine contempt.

"It was no use. I couldn't make him see, what all the camp saw, that his life wasn't worth a straw with that half-mad Kendrick oiling up his pistol and shooting at all kinds of targets down by the creek.

"I went home past Mrs. Chapman's, and she asked a good many questions about her son. She had heard very little from him since he had taken up with Jess Raymond, and she was getting anxious. She made me stay there an hour or so, telling all about Lloyd and whether the work was too hard for him, and whether he got enough to eat. She said she'd heard that lime burning was bad for the eyes, and she wanted to know if his had been affected. She showed me a wonderful red jacket that she had knitted for him. She had been at work on it for weeks, and it was nearly finished. I never knew a mother with so much feeling for a son, and now that he had left off drinking and was behaving himself decently, I felt that he was really worthy of it.

"She grew so lonely there in the woods that she came near setting out to stay a-while at the camp, where she could be near her son, but she said it was rather hard for her to get about, so she waited. He had promised to come home about Christmas time. It seemed he was waiting to see her before he told her anything about that girl of his—probably thought telling her now by letter would make the poor old soul more lonely than ever. I believe he thought, too, that she would be a bit jealous.

"And so it went on to the night of the gale. It was a night that everybody round here remembers, for the country had a good sweeping that time. It was a dismal night for the old woman, you may believe. She didn't go to bed, but sat up all night and heard the howling of the blasts as they tossed the grey tops of the trees together, and down went a tree here and there with a crash. The wind always made her fidgety, and now her nerves were sadly strained.

"Well, in the midst of a lull she heard a clatter of hoofs, and a young man rode up wild and hot, and begged her to hide him, for the officers were on his track. He had no hat or coat, and his shirt was nearly cut off him by falling branches. He had been drinking a little up at town, he said, and had got into a shooting scrape. The best man in the camp at handling a pistol had set upon him, and it was one life or another.

"The old woman listened to him, and, seeing how like he was to her own son, and overlooking his carouse, as she had often done Lloyd's, she argued to herself that it was all right, and that it was lucky her own boy had never got into such a scrape. Had he done so, she would have thanked the one who had saved him. Besides, it was a matter of self-defence.

"She hurried the young man into a very small attic, the entrance to which was over the kitchen. Then she gave his horse a cut with a switch, and he ran down the road, leaping a fallen tree here and there, but making headway at a good gait.

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"Turning, she saw four horsemen dash up, with hard breathing beasts under them. They were the officers from Orimbo. None of them knew her. They asked her if she had seen a young man go by there.

"Perhaps it was her side look when she told them 'no' that made them search so carefully about the place. They had ridden so hard that their horses needed a rest, so they waited there a while and continued their search about the house and the little outbuildings by the light of a lantern they had borrowed from her. By this time the wind had gone down and the woman had come to herself, for what with the gale and the man-hunt she had been greatly upset.

"'You'll not find him in the chicken-house, nor in the wood-shed, nor in the well!' she fired up at them. 'I tell you nobody has stopped here to-night. You're only losing time, for, now I think of it, when the wind was highest I heard something that sounded like horse-shoes running down the road.'

"Then she sat down limply on the back step, for the brave speech had cost her breath and nerve.

"So, after taking another look through the house and darting a glance up the little attic hole from which she had taken the ladder while they were outside, they at last mounted their horses and dug in their spurs to such a purpose that they soon overtook the horse, which had settled down to a quiet walk.

"They were in the open country and the moon was up. There were no fresh tracks, though the ground was soft and they could have seen them by sharp searching. As one stirrup was flung over the saddle they saw that the horse had come some distance with no rider.

"It was getting towards daybreak now, and two of the men came back and camped at a little spring in front of the house, where they took another rest. The old woman saw them from between her shutters, but she did not go out, for her man was still in the attic. He had not dared to come down, as he had been expecting another part of the *posse* to pass by. Surely enough, the party did pass just about sunrise, hailing the men at the spring with: 'Ain't givin it up yet, have you?' to which the reply was: 'Oh he's off in the redwoods somewhere. He isn't fool enough to trot along a stage road in broad daylight.'

"The men at the spring hung round for three or four hours. They didn't go near the house, but just stayed where they were, guarding the road and waiting for the others to come back.

"Meanwhile the old woman got breakfast, and passed some ham and eggs, some bread, and a good strong cup of coffee up to her lodger in the attic.

"At last the whole troop of man hunters came back, and they all rode off to a track a mile back which they thought the murderer might have taken.

"Rather than risk another search the woman told the man in the attic that he had better get out now and make up the old back track for the hills. So down he came shaking in fright, and looking round as cautiously as a wood-rat.

"It was a chilly morning after the storm, and he looked cold and pinched. So she out with the very jacket she had knit for her boy, and handed it to him.

"'The left sleeve ain't quite done,' she said, 'but the jacket's good and warm.'

"He pulled it on, and, with a mumble of thanks—he had hardly spoken to her since his first coming—sneaked out at the back door, and up through the woods towards the hills.

"Men that she knew came along with axes and saws and cleared the coach road. They seemed to fight shy of the cottage, but one, a warm-hearted Irishman, made bold to come in and offer her his sympathy in 'the hoor o' yer distress.' She looked at him with a woods-woman's intuition of evil. What had happened? She shrank in terror from his words, but she would have them.

"Then he told her, with well-meant but crude and heart-stabbing speech, that her son Lloyd had been slain by a man named Joe Kendrick, and kept up a running river of words of pity and consolation.

"She did not sink upon the floor, nor fall into her chair, nor cry, nor moan; but she ran to the the fireplace and took down down a repeating rifle that hung there, and ran like a girl of fifteen up the track towards the hills.

"All the morning she followed that track, tracking the man like a hound. All the afternoon she kept on over the hills and among the great rocks where she knew the slayer of her son was hiding.

"At last spent by her unwonted effort, her old limbs quivering under her, and her back aching cruelly, she sat down on a rock. She was faint from want of food, and her throat seemed as dry as the coarse, wrinkled skin of the back of her hand. For a little while she closed her eyes and bent her head on her arm that lay on the sharp granite.

"The torturing vision was plain before her, even with shut eyes, her boy lying dead with a bullet hole in his back.

"The shadow of the rock crept gently over her and shielded her grey thin-haired head from the sun. A brown lizard looked at her with an eye that held something of pity. She of the redwood deeps, unused to the scorching heat, drooped there on the dry hill like a withered flower.

"A little breeze came down and rustled a bush at her side. She opened her eyes, and below her, beside a rock, not more than fifty yards away, was a red something. She stared hard, her poor eyes strained and unwinking. The blotch of red was the jacket she had knitted for her son. She could tell that shade among a score. And that red jacket clothed the breast of her son's murderer.

"She breathed a soundless laugh, her face lighting with joy. But when she lifted her rifle her arm shook so that its loose stock rattled in her hand. She crouched in the shadow behind a lower surface of the rock, and the rifle stole cautiously into place, resting there firmly.

"She shut one eye and glanced along the barrel. Her arm hugged the rock lovingly. Thrice the head went by the peep hole, and she felt that her hard breathing was marring the sight. So she held her breath, and soon the head was fairly in front, with just a little rim of red above it. Her finger that had been fondling the trigger all the while now pressed it quickly.

"There was a crack, and a smoke-puff passed away on the breeze. She looked eagerly at the man in the red jacket, but he sat there, leaning against the rock. So she quickly threw out the empty shell, drew her head, and fired again. Still the man in the red shirt sat there, his face staring up at her and mocking her. As carefully and deliberately as before she fired another shot. Yet there was no movement of the red jacket.

"She put a withered hand to her brow and pressed it hard. Then she rose and stole cautiously down the rocks and through the chaparral, carefully watching the figure before her. When she came down to it she saw that the head was tilted back a little so that it rested on the rocks. The eyes were wide open.

"In the breast of the red jacket were three bullet holes.

"That's all, gentlemen, and here we are at the end of the journey."

Robert Anson.

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Testimonials Absolutely convincing,
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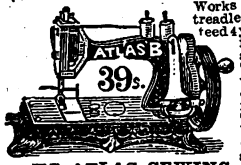

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A WEEKLY MAGAZINE OF SPORT & ADVENTURE

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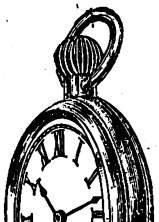
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If you wish us to send it specially packed in strong box by registered post we will do so if you send sixpence extra (that is a postal order for 2/-), as an article like this should be registered to insure absolutely safe delivery.—Address, *Homeland* Offices, (86 Dept.), 118 & 119 Newgate Street, London, E.C.

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A Magnificent Complexion is assured in a few months by the free use of LILLIE POWDER. Its delicate MEDICINAL properties soothe and strengthen the supersensitive nerves of the Skin. It is the most perfect skin FOOD and TONIC of the day. For all ailments of the Skin.
THIS IS WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY:
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Most Beneficial.
"Lillie Powder is most beneficial to the skin, and I shall always use it."—**Phyllis Broughton.**
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"I think your new Lillie Powder quite the very best, and you may be pleased to know I have used it ever since I first went on the stage."—**Ellaline Terriss.**
ORDER IT at once of your Chemist or Hairdresser, and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious.
Price 1/- per Box.
Three Tints—White, Rose and Cream.
Invented by Mrs. LANGTRY.
Prepared under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. CLARKSON.
BE SURE It Bears Mrs. Langtry's Certificate.

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

A. L. T.—Twenty-four members of the House of Commons are total abstainers.

John.—You will find it a peculiarity of Russian railways that their stations are generally two miles or more distant from the towns and villages which they serve. This is on account of the danger of fire, the houses in small places generally being thatched with straw.

O. M.—In the wild, remote, mountainous country of Patagonia a small band of Welsh emigrants thirty years ago established a colony. After encountering many dangers and difficulties, the colony has now arrived at a fairly prosperous stage. It comprises about 3,000 persons, the great majority of whom speak the Welsh language.

L. G.—The month of January has proved particularly fatal to members of Her Majesty's family. January has witnessed the death of the Queen's grandfather, George III. (1820); of her father, the Duke of Kent (1820); of her uncle, Frederick Duke of York (1827); of her aunt, the Princess Elizabeth Landgravine of Hesse Homburg (1840); and of her grandson, the Duke of Clarence (1892). Two occupants of the English throne have also died in January, Henry VIII. (1547) and Charles I. (1649). Two Princes who would, if there had been no revolution in 1688, have sat upon that throne, also died in January—the Old Pretender (1766), and the Young Pretender (1788).

H. F.—The life of an ostrich is commonly thirty years, although eighty years has been claimed for individual cases.

Author.—The favourite method of inducing a person to quit this earth prematurely in Turkey is to place powdered diamonds in his coffee. An English company has been formed to exhume the bodies of those who are suspected of having been poisoned in this manner, and extracting by chemical means the diamond dust which they contain.

Geologist.—The lake of Morat, in Switzerland, has a queer habit of turning red two or three times every ten years, owing to the presence of little aquatic plants. The peculiarity of the matter is, that Lake Morat is the only lake in which this curious growth is developed.

L. T.—The Danes were accustomed to eat six times a day.

Harassed One.—Your lot in life is evidently a hard one. But, take heart, "Harassed One," at any rate, you have the consolation that those who have to work hard for their living generally enjoy longer lives than those who do not.

R. J. S.—The biggest contract ever offered to Messrs. Spiers and Pond was one to supply food for the French forces engaged in the Franco-German war. The offer was made on the breakdown of the French Commissariat Department. It could not be accepted, for its carrying out would have been a breach of England's neutrality.

Mat.—Yes, the soap plant grows in the valleys of California. It is a tall, slender-stemmed liliaceous plant, with purple and white flowers, which played an important part in the economy of the Spanish population, and is still more or less used by the country people. It rises from a subterranean bulb, which is egg-shaped in form, two or three inches in diameter, and enveloped in a thick coating of black, matted, hair-like fibres. This bulb has the detergent properties of soap, cleaning the hands or clothing quite as well as and much more pleasantly than the coarser kinds of soap.

A. G. H.—The Sirdar is Irish by birth, having been born at Crotto House, near Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Sleepless One.—I don't think you will suffer much more from insomnia if you try the following simple plan. Before retiring for the night stand in a place where you know the air to be fresh, and take long, deep breaths very slowly and regularly, so as to relieve the lower part of the lungs of all injurious accumulations. Then darken your sleeping apartment completely, and get into bed.

T. F.—With ordinary service, a good railway-engine ought to last, at least, twelve years.

F. R. intends to go in for frog-eating, and wants to know the best time of the year for this dainty.———Frogs are best for the table in the autumn. They are then fat and sleek, and there is a peculiar and desirable flavour about them at that season not possessed at any other. At this season they are quite desirable, and form a very clever side-dish at any meal.

G. M.—There is one horse for every twenty persons in this country.

B. A. O.—A curious barometer is used in Germany and Switzerland. It is a jar of water, with a frog and a little step-ladder in it. When the frog comes out of the water and sits on the steps, a rain storm will soon occur.

Candle.—The majority of grown people, as well as the children, in ancient Rome rarely lighted a candle unless at dawn. The bedtime in Rome, Athens, Egypt, and other parts of the Mediterranean shore was between seven and nine o'clock in the evening, according to the season. The Turks go to bed early and get up early to this day.

Hanky.—The Empress Josephine was the first to publicly use a pocket-handkerchief. Her teeth were bad, and she gracefully concealed the defect by holding a costly handkerchief before her lips. The ladies of the Court followed her example, and the custom was thus inaugurated as a fashion.

S. T.—In Switzerland and other mountainous countries, the goat leads long strings of animals daily to and from the mountains, but it is in South Africa that it is regularly kept and employed as a leader of flocks of sheep. Should a blinding storm of rain or hail, drive the silly sheep before it, or cause them to huddle together in a corner, so as to suffocate each other, the trained goat will wake them up, and by a method best known to himself, will induce them to follow him to a place of safety.

C. Y. C.—In St. Petersburg every bicyclist is bound to have affixed to the back of the machine a metal plate on which the registered number is displayed in figures large enough to be legible from a considerable distance.

Joan.—The armour given by Charles VII. at Bourges to Joan of Arc was supposed to have been discovered some three years ago. The armour bears the arms that Charles VII. granted her, matches with the descriptions handed down to us, and would be a fit for a girl of 5ft. 3in. It has long hung amongst other suits of armour, and no one suspected that it was Joan of Arc's coat of mail.

T. E.—There are forty-seven Chinese temples in America.

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IT IS

GOOD to have a pure soap that will not destroy the texture of fine fabric.

BETTER to have a soap that will not harm the tenderest skin; but it is by far the

BEST to have a soap that is not merely harmless, but DIRECTLY BENEFICIAL.

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Good because it will not destroy the texture or colour of any fabric.

Better because it will not harm the delicate tissue of any skin.

Best of all, because it is DIRECTLY BENEFICIAL.

SWAN White Floating SOAP is made of oils and fats pure and sweet enough to eat.
SWAN White Floating SOAP will not injure the daintiest or most delicate fabric.
SWAN White Floating SOAP makes damask, and other fine linen, white as the whitest snow.
SWAN White Floating SOAP gives a health-glow to the skin, inducing that "soothing sensation" at once so delightful and so comfortable.

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TRIED FOR OUR £1,000 PRIZE?

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 536. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 8TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

The World's Medicine.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

BEECHAM'S PILLS

BEECHAM'S PILLS

BEECHAM'S PILLS

BEECHAM'S PILLS

Are universally admitted to be Worth a Guinea a Box for Bilious and Nervous Disorders, Flatulence and Pain in the Stomach, Sick Headache, Giddiness, a sensation of repletion and discomfort after eating, Dizziness and Drowsiness, Cold Chills, Flushings of Heat, Loss of Appetite, Shortness of Breath, Costiveness, Scurvy, and Blotches on the Skin, Sleeplessness, Disturbing Dreams, Low Spirits, Loss of Energy, and Nervous Dyspepsia in all its forms. The first dose generally gives relief in twenty minutes. This is no fiction, for in countless cases the immediate effect has proved remarkable.

Every sufferer is earnestly invited to make a trial of Beecham's Pills, which will fully justify their reputation of being Worth a Guinea a Box.

For females of all ages the Pills are simply invaluable, as a few doses will restore free and regular conditions, and effectually remove the causes of much suffering to the sex. Those who have once experienced the positive benefit and speedy relief obtained by the use of Beecham's Pills would never, on any account be without them. If taken according to the directions given with each box, they will soon restore females to the happiness of health, with the sparkling

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eye, the elastic step, the clear bright skin, and the physical grace, which are among the most beautiful of natural charms.

For a Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, and all Disorders of the Liver, Beecham's Pills act like "Magic," and a few doses will be found to work wonders on the most important organs in the human economy. They brace up the nervous and muscular systems, revive the long-lost complexion, bring back the keen edge of appetite, and arouse into action, the, too often, slumbering energies of mind and body. As a blood purifier, it is not too much to say that they have no equal. They eliminate whatever septic matter may have altered the condition of the vital fluid, while, at the same time, they induce a new "building-up force," the effect of which is quickly visible in the most marked and gratifying improvement in the general health. One of the best guarantees that can be offered to the nervous and debilitated is that Beecham's Pills have by far the Largest Sale of any Patent Medicine in the World, being over Six Million Boxes per annum.

This has been achieved without the Publication of Testimonials. The convincing fact is that Beecham's Pills

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Second Class (9 Prizes) £23 Cycle for £9.
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Fourth Class (15 prizes) £23 Cycle for £11.
Fifth Class (18 prizes) £23 Cycle for £12.
Sixth Class (20 prizes) £23 Cycle for £13.
Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14.

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Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Enclose 2 stamps for postage of Catalogue and Result of Competition. As so very few persons are able to call and inspect the machines **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for one of our Consolation Prizes, **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any prize liable to forfeiture.

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Mark letters "Short Stories" on top corner of envelope, and address to the Managing Director,

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59 & 60 CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

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LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.
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to 18 Clerkenwell Road, London.

Short Stories

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 536.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 8th, 1899.

The Revenge of Foon Luk.

THE curtain of the Varieties went up like a mist, and the orchestra after the overture began a rondeau. The seats were filled with an anxious and expectant audience. Foon Luk, the child wonder, was to appear. Wonderful things had been written about this mite of Chinese femininity who performed such feats of contortion and strength. The playbills had pictured her in full Oriental Court costume, gay with colours, and golden with the dragons on the silks. She was a success before she appeared.

Before a bar of the music had played she came forth from the wings, with short, quick steps towards the footlights. The grateful applause of the audience came to her as she kneeled down on the mat before beginning. Resting on her knees and hands she bent forward until her head touched the floor.

"She is praying," said one in the audience to his neighbour, "that is the way those heathens pray."

He was right; she was praying, but not one of those whose eyes looked at her could have guessed what her prayer was. Amid a dead silence she arose and stood up while a big, strong-looking Celestial brought chairs and other paraphernalia upon the stage.

"Hurry," he said to her, roughly, in Chinese, "they will laugh at you if you wait as though you were afraid. Hurry, or you will know what the black stick means when you have finished."

She began tremblingly. As fast as the man builded the chairs one on top of the other, her body, serpent-like glided in and out of the rungs, through the open backs, and over the seats. It seemed as though she had the power to balance those beneath her. When she had reached a point so high that the man could no longer reach he tossed the chairs up to her, and this was continued until ten chairs stood, one above the other, in the centre of the stage. All the while he had kept talking in their native language.

"Beware, if you fall, I will prod you like a pig; make but one error and you will never see to-morrow; smile, or you will fail; let a laugh come to your lips, you cat."

To all of these sentences the child replied not one word. She kept her knees from trembling and performed her feats well. When the tenth chair was in position, the man handed her up a lacquer globe. She balanced the globe on the back of the highest chair, then crawling up until she stood on it, she walked it slowly, as it rolled from one end of the chair back to the other.

Not a sound was heard in the theatre—the silence was awful, even the music stopped—until she was safe back on the chair seat again. Then the applause burst out, and for the first time a genuine smile came to her lips, and she bowed, half bashfully—like any child would—in the direction of the misty rows of faces beyond the footlights.

Gliding in and out of the chairs as they were taken down, she reached the stage as she had left it. Then came the man's turn. He faced the audience and bowed obsequiously; then stripping off his outer blouse, he threw himself upon a padded table and beckoned the child to him. She came, and he picked her up and raising her on his upturned feet, balanced her a moment and then sent her through the air in a somersault, and caught her as she descended.

"Ai-ya!" she said, and the audience applauded again.

"What is it now?" he asked her.

"It pains my back."

"The black stick will pain you more than that," he answered, as with a quick, deft jerk, he whirled her round again. The act ended.

Hand in hand, they bowed themselves off the stage, amid applause, but were called back to bow again, once, twice, three times, by the enthusiastic audience.

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That was the *début* of Foon Luk, after two years of hard work under a cruel and vicious owner. She was a slave who had never known freedom. Her parents had sold her for fifteen dollars to Chin Foo, who had taken advantage of her supple limbs and lithe body to make her a paying investment. He had succeeded; and, as he believed, he was on the verge of a fortune.

For two years he had trained her and had beaten her with a malacca cane, which he had been pleased to call the "black stick." It was an instrument of torture in her eyes, and even now the mention of it made her tremble. When she prayed to the god set up in the rooms of Chin Foo, she did not pray for health or happiness or fortune—she prayed that she might die, and at night, as she lay in her bunk, her lips formed prayers to other gods—unknown to her—for a release. She had known no pleasures in her eleven years of life, and she looked forward to nothing but the work in the theatres, which hurt her back. Her "ai-ya's" of pain were naturally mistaken by the audience, who applauded them.

Out of the theatre they went to the home of Chin Foo, down dark streets and across lighted avenues. Not one word was spoken until they were safe in the rooms, which looked sorrowful in their dimness. Then he turned on her, half fiercely.

"I will kill you if you ever again cry out with your 'ai-ya.' You have cost me enough; you must now begin to earn!"

"It was your heel in my back that hurt," she began.

"You should have no hurts. Did I cry out like a woman when I appeared before the Emperor, the Son of Heaven, and the clumsy knife-thrower cast a blade which cut my ears?" and he held his hand up to the side of his head, as if the thought of it pained him still. "No; I smiled, as if it put new strength in my limbs. Go to bed."

And she crept away to sleep, while the Chinaman went out among his friends to tell of his success. In her narrow bunk she prayed, but her prayer for release had in it a tincture of revenge, for she begged Kuung-I, the god of justice, to take her master that he might never come back, and then, suddenly, as if some heathen god had looked kindly at her, a thought came to her which made her start, raise up on one elbow, and peer about in the gloom to see if there was anyone in the room. She scarcely dared think of it, yet she could not put it out of her mind. At last she fell asleep, and dreamed strange things.

"It is done," she called out once, then she awoke and shivered. Whatever her thoughts had been, little Foon Luk was changed when she awoke the next day and rehearsed, as well as the space of the room would allow, the utmost difficult part of her work.

"What has come over you?" asked Chin Foo once, when he found her looking at him with a calm and steady eye.

"Nothing," she answered, evasively, "but to-day I would like to go to the Temple."

"And spill good wine upon the floor for a love, I suppose?" He was in a good humour.

"No; I want no lovers."

He dressed her up like a boy, and took her to the Temple of the Chung Wah Gung San. She prayed before the god of Justice, and she cast the prayer-sticks, and the omens were good. She departed with a light heart.

That day when she went home, and after Chin Foo had gone out, she took his *yen hoe* off the opium tray, and tried to throw it so the point would stick in the door. It was a long while before she succeeded, but when at last the slender point sunk deep in the wood, she was satisfied. Every day when he went out she practised with it, until at last she became so expert that out of every ten times she threw it, seven times would it stick in the door.

At last, one unlucky day, the long wire needle broke. It did not take Chin Foo long to discover it.

"Have you done this?" he asked, holding up the pieces.

"Yes," she answered. "The more tricks, the more money. I was trying a new one."

"What was it?" he demanded, forgetting in his curiosity to be angry. And when she told him, he was so pleased that he promised to get a set of throwing-knives, and teach her all he knew. They had been doing well at the theatres, and he did not beat her so much as he had before he began to get rich. A new trick meant more money. He bought the knives, and together they practised until at last he said:

"You throw better than the *hi-tze*, who appeared before the Emperor."

Her aim was marvellously straight, and her arm was wonderfully strong, if its strength was judged by the depth the steel blades sank into the wood. He took to praising her, for he was soon to double her work. A chance came for them to go with a circus, and now that the knife-throwing was perfect, they would do two acts, and then he would receive a much larger salary. Ah! the sun of prosperity was shining for him, and he would soon be a rich man, if she would only live long enough.

He signed a contract with the circus manager. It was settled. They were to start through the country in a week. He came home and told the child. She looked startled.

"You do not want to go?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, yes, I want to go! But—see, I have no more good clothes. I must make some clothes."

He was in a liberal mood. "I will buy you some."

She wanted money before she went. She had tried for it and failed. She looked about the room in despair. Upon her wrist was a jade bracelet. Ah! that would do! She dressed herself in the boy's suit she had been wont to wear when going about the quarter, and taking one of the throwing-knives, locked the door behind her and slipped down the stairs into the street. She hurried around the corner to the shop of Su Quong, the locksmith, who had always been kind to her.

"Su Quong," she said, "make me a knife like this," and she pulled the broad-bladed weapon out from under her blouse. He took it, and examined it critically.

"Ah, little one, but that is no use. That would cut nothing," and he struck it against a piece of wood. "See, it only bruises."

"Yes, but I want you to make a good one, with the same shape. Make it so keen that the edges will cut through a pillow filled with down. But it must run the same shape, and with a handle like this one."

"And who are you going to kill, little highbinder?" he asked.

"I am not a highbinder," she answered trembling. "I want the knife for my work at the theatre, but I have no money. You can take my jade," and she held the bracelet towards him.

"I want no money, little one, and if you were a highbinder, I would still be your friend. The gods are not always good to the most deserving."

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She ran back to her rooms, and was safe once more. She practised throwing her knives at a revolving disc which Chin Foo had made, and which was the most difficult feat known to throwers. She was to do this in the circus. The day before they were to leave, she went to the locksmith's to get her knives. The old man had made a marvellous sharp weapon, exactly like the other, but for its keenness and the fact that it had a finer point. He handed them to her.

"I have asked the gods to bless them both," he said, gravely. "When you need a friend, come to me. I knew your father."

Then she went out. The sharp knife she hid secretly and carefully.

They were with the circus at last. "The Chinese Child Knife-Thrower and Premier Contortionist" was a successful favourite. In every town in which the circus appeared, ladies insisted on calling on her in her dressing-room. They made her presents, and raved over her. They did not know what a woman she really was.

Chin Foo, successful beyond his dreams, took to the opium and cut down his act, so that Foon Luk did nearly all the work. The principal thing he did now was to hold the wooden ball suspended by a rope, and swing it gently, while she threw knives at it. Once a carelessly thrown knife had struck him in the side, but as such knives as they were could not penetrate cloth, it fell to the sawdust, and he had scowled at her and called her "a cat."

He was careful about scolding her very much now, because a change had come over her. She seemed more of a woman. There was a peculiar light in her narrow eyes, and a firmness about her lips that set him to thinking.

One day the manager said to him:

"Chin, that ball trick with the knives don't take as well as it used to. What's the matter with you standing up against a board, and letting her throw them round you?"

"See lat?" asked Chin, putting one hand up to his injured ear; "big knife thlower in Chiny, he thlow before Emplorlor 'n hit ear. No good."

But the manager was firm and insisted, and the end of it all was that the next week the Chinese Child Wonder was throwing knives round Chin Foo's head and body, and coming so close to him that he could feel the wind they raised. He told her she threw them too hard, and because she did not answer him he struck her. She cried out in pain, and a woman rider—who heard her—told Chin Foo if he did not keep his hands off her she would get a couple of the canvas-men to give him a thrashing.

The circus had struck a new town on Sunday, and Chin Foo, more than ever a slave to opium, had spent the day with his beloved pipe. He kept at it Monday, and when he dressed to appear in the knife-throwing act, his eyes were half closed and he was drowsy with the drug. He leaned with his back against the board, and the applause which greeted Foon Luk seemed to come from a great distance. He shut his eyes, because the bright lights made his head whirl about unpleasantly.

"Thud!" That was the first knife. He felt it go by his ear. Thud, thud, thud, they came and sunk deep in the board. The audience applauded wildly. There were four more knives. The next one struck under his arm-pit.

"That's a great throw!" yelled a man in a seat on the edge of the ring. Scarcely before he had finished, another knife was hurtling through the air. Those who were looking saw it strike the blouse of the Chinaman on the left side, they saw his arms reach up spasmodically, and then he sank down in the sawdust. Like one dazed, the girl stood with two knives still in her hand, while the circus men rushed over to the wounded man. As they carried him out of the ring on a litter, she fainted. When she came to, the bareback rider was fanning her, and there were ladies standing around.

"Chin Foo hurt?" she managed to ask.

"Yes," said one of the ladies, "he is hurt very bad."

"Chin Foo dead?" she asked again.

"Yes," she was answered.

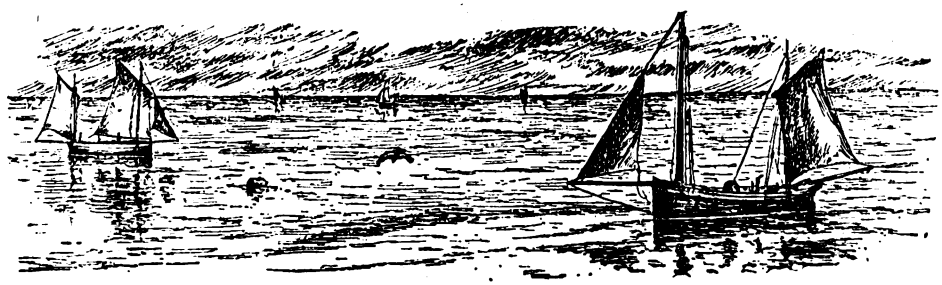
Then she closed her eyes peacefully and fell asleep.

The rural coroner and his jury finally decided it was an accident. The knife which killed the Chinaman was the same as the rest, and there was nothing to show any murderous intent on the part of the child, who was released.

In the trunk of the bareback-rider was a knife, the edges of which were like razors. Long afterwards, when Foon Luk had gone, the rider showed it, blood-stained as it was, to Mdlle. Mirabella, the trapeze artist.

"That's what killed the Chinaman," he said. "It would go through boiler iron—that knife would. I helped to carry him in the tent, and I saw it, and swapped it for one of the others. I didn't want to see the little gal convicted."

Fred Wilson.



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JONAH'S ANTIPATHY;

Or, THE COCK OF THE WALK.

AN excited and somewhat acrimonious discussion was taking place as to a suitable name for the pup. It was at the breakfast table. Everybody had a theory to advance, and seemed disposed to take it as a personal affront if that particular suggestion was not adopted.

Mr. Lightfoot thought that the pup should be called *May*, on the ground that May is the month of promise, and he believed that this pup promised to be the ugliest little beast that ever wagged a tail.

His daughter, Violet, the owner of the dog, was a sweet girl, with a soul above vulgar jokes. She wanted a name which was noble and dignified. Something that recalled the historic and beautiful.

Her brother, after a moment's silence, suggested "Billie," on the ground that it would represent both Sir William Harcourt, and the Emperor of Germany.

Mrs. Lightfoot thought it ought to be called "Fido," because all dogs are called "Fido." Moreover, she was sure she would never be able to learn a fresh name for a dog.

Mrs. Lightfoot was a woman whose range of view was strictly limited. Her intellectual attainments were trifling, and her impression of things in general somewhat gloomy. She was a woman who turned out her dining-room twice a week, and changed her servants once a quarter.

The debate on the dog's name was resumed with vigour again and again, at last it was settled by a flash of inspiration.

One day the pup playfully swallowed a silver thimble.

"That settles it," said Miss Lightfoot, eagerly. "I shall call him 'Jonah.'"

Mr. Lightfoot looked puzzled. "Why should we call him Jonah?" he asked.

"I believe," said Miss Lightfoot, with dignity, "that Jonah was the man who swallowed a whale."

She threw out this remark with the air of conscious strength, like an advocate who quotes a forgotten Act of Parliament, and puts his opponent out of court.

Then she saw her mistake, and with that delightful lack of logic, which is a woman's strength, added: "Well, I don't care whether Jonah swallowed the whale, or whether the whale swallowed Jonah. I shall call the dog 'Jonah.' So that settles it."

Naturally that did settle it. You can't argue with a girl who takes such a broad view of the facts of the case.

So the dog was called Jonah by everybody except Mrs. Lightfoot, whose mind oscillated between Fido and Tiny; Fido, for the reason already stated, Tiny, because she once had a school friend whose brother's chum had a dog named Tiny. But never under any circumstance was Mrs. Lightfoot known to call the animal by its proper name.

As the pup grew up into doghood it proved to be one of the most unpleasing animals that ever lived. Whether the discussion over its name had in some way warped its moral faculties, or whether the thimble had proved so hard of digestion as to undermine the dog's higher nature, will never be known.

Its very appearance created suspicion. No dog fancier would have dared to classify it. Its hair was long, thin and wiry, its tail short and bony-looking. It had long legs, a very wide and powerful chest, a small nobby head, and eyes which were uncannily bright and defiant-looking.

When a stranger spoke to him, he generally curled up his lips expressively, and showed an appalling set of teeth, while every hair on his body stood up stiff and and straight like a wire. Then a low, grumbling sound was heard, like an earthquake many miles away, which steadily increased in volume, until it resembled the roar of a decent-sized lion.

After this, the stranger would generally change the conversation. There was no encouragement in trying to talk to Jonah.

There are some dogs with whom you are intimate as soon as you meet them. You roll them over on their backs, and call them fancy names, and dig them in the ribs.

No man who valued his life ever attempted such a liberty with Jonah. It would have amounted to an act of suicide.

Even the family treated him with some deference. If Jonah fancied any particular chair he simply occupied it. Nobody ventured to turn him out. In fact if he had been the Vicar of the Parish, or even the Rate Collector he could scarcely have met with more courtesy.

The first request made to a visitor always was: "Please don't touch the dog."

Most visitors, after the first glance, had no wish to touch the dog. In fact, many of them suddenly remembered important appointments at the other end of London. Sometimes a visitor would try to fascinate the animal by offering him a biscuit. But no biscuit that was ever baked would soften Jonah's heart. He simply swallowed it with an air of cynical distrust, and then lay on the ground watching the simple-minded stranger with glittering eyes, apparently with a view to seeing that no biscuits were smuggled into his pockets, to eat on the way home.

To be sure there were advantages attached to this. Mrs. Lightfoot's mother dreaded the animal to such an extent that she reduced a fortnight's visit to one of three days, for which Mr. Lightfoot was so grateful that he said he would consider it a privilege to be allowed to pay the dog tax twice a year.

When he walked abroad, Jonah made himself equally objectionable. It was observed that no cats were seen in the neighbourhood. Jonah hated cats. The very word "cat" seemed to upset him. At the sound of it, every hair on his body would stiffen immediately, and when he found his feelings had been trifled with, and that there was not a cat in sight, he would step downstairs into the kitchen, and look for the servants.

He offered battle to every dog in the neighbourhood. No provocation was required. When Jonah met a dog, big or little, he at once offered to fight. If the opposing dog was modest, and showed no disposition for a combat,

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Jonah would spare him with a dignified air of disappointment. But the slightest sign of spirit or independence in another dog, roused his ire at once, and he took off his coat, so to speak, and did battle, until the other dog expressed himself as satisfied.

In short, Jonah was a heavy burden on all who knew him. Everybody feared him. His pretty mistress had no admirers, because Jonah didn't allow that kind of thing, and the entire family groaned under his tyranny. It was no use to think of giving him away, because, in the first place, nobody would accept him, and, in the second place, Jonah flatly refused to go. As for having him poisoned—well, it was generally agreed that that *ought* to be done, but nobody seemed anxious to undertake it.

At last Jonah met his match.

There was a fox terrier living a few doors away, who was Jonah's great antipathy.

This fox terrier was a prize dog, and a conceited, uppish little beast into the bargain.

It used to make game of Jonah.

Its favourite trick was to get behind its own gate, through which Jonah could not pass, and laugh at him as he went by, and call him names and make grimaces.

This kind of thing nearly drove Jonah mad. He used to get up early in the morning in the hope of catching that fox terrier, and killing it.

The fox terrier's owner was a young doctor who used to stand at the window to watch Jonah and his mistress go past. He seemed to take a great deal of interest in the matter, whether his interest was really centred in the fox terrier, Jonah, or Miss Lightfoot, it would be difficult to say.

One morning, Jonah was taking his mistress for a walk, when he espied the fox terrier turning the corner. Jonah stepped out briskly. Things had been very dull of late. He had not had a fight since the previous morning, and as for cats—well it was nearly a month since he destroyed an old Thomas which had eluded his attacks for several years. He had strong hopes he might have five minutes real fun.

For once the fox terrier was off his guard, and before he knew exactly what was happening, Jonah had seized him by the neck and was shaking him vigorously.

Then Jonah laid his victim down, and stood over him growling. The fox terrier wondered if the world had come to an end, and wished he had lived a better life.

Jonah was thoroughly enjoying himself. To make the situation perfect, he only required a little opposition. If only the fox-terrier would bite him, Jonah would be a happy dog for days to come.

Just then he heard a quick step, and looked round with an air of annoyance.

It was the young doctor, who owned the fox terrier. Jonah was delighted. Here was some opposition at last. He had never yet met a human being who could face him when he growled, and showed his teeth, and erected all his hairs.

He went through his usual programme, but to his surprise, the young doctor, instead of retreating, watched him with stern grey eyes, and produced a small, but unpleasant-looking dog-whip.

Jonah felt it was time to put an end to such nonsense, and stepped up slowly to do battle.

Quick as thought—while Jonah was selecting a convenient part of the doctor's legs to lay hold of—his opponent caught him by the back of the neck in a grip of iron.

Then Jonah, the hitherto unconquered, was thrown down on the ground and whipped.

At first he growled and swore outrageously, then he barked, at last he whined for mercy.

It was a hearty thrashing, a thrashing that seemed to embrace the whole of Jonah's cast-iron body. When it was finished, he got up, and scarcely knew himself. He felt sore all over. It was worse than fighting. His tail was so limp, that he rather doubted that he had one, and felt as if he didn't much care.

Miss Lightfoot arrived on the scene.

"How dare you thrash my dear little dog?" she inquired haughtily.

The young doctor raised his hat.

"Your dear little dog, madam," he said courteously, "is a nuisance to the neighbourhood. I have great hopes that the slight chastisement it has been my pleasure to administer will reform his character."

"I must admit that Jonah is a little bit troublesome," admitted Miss Lightfoot reluctantly. "You must really try to be a good doggie, Jonah."

Jonah winked sagaciously, and even made a faint attempt to wag his tail.

"You know Miss Lightfoot," said the young doctor, who by the way evidently knew her name, "what that dog wants is a master."

Miss lightfoot blushed slightly, and stammered some words to that effect, that he was the first person who had dared to correct the dog.

"With proper training he would be a fine old fellow, wouldn't you, Jonah?" he continued pleasantly. "Come here, and say how d'you do," and Jonah came, like a lamb.

That happened two years ago.

Now in one of the suburbs there is a young doctor, with an increasing practice, and a very pretty wife.

In their back garden, chained to a kennel there is a dog named Jonah.

He is a model to all the dogs for miles around. He goes through life gravely and sedately. His dislike for cats is a reasonable one, and goes no further than driving them from the back garden. He is on good terms with the neighbours' dogs, and only fights when circumstances compel him to. It must be confessed however that when he does fight, he thoroughly enjoys himself.

There is one person to whom he is sincerely attached—his master. For his mistress he has a patronising and somewhat contemptuous affection, but he is persuaded that the doctor is the bravest, cleverest and greatest man who lives.

Besides the doctor and his wife, and Jonah, there is one other member of the family—a fox terrier. Jonah still hates that fox terrier with all the force of a strong, well-governed mind. He doesn't bully him, or attack him—he simply ignores his existence.

That fox terrier continues to be Jonah's antipathy.

Lloyd Williams.

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GUILLAUME.

It all occurred in the Department of La Vendée, whither a business matter had taken me.

I had made an appointment with Guillaume Blaisot, the farmer with whom my business was to be transacted, to meet him at Marans, at the mouth of the Sévre, opposite to the Isle of Rhé, in Pertuis-Poitou. I reached Maillepais, after a very uncomfortable journey, by the diligence, hoping to proceed by water.

As I was waiting at the door of the inn for the arrival of the b at that mine host had promised me, I perceived an old acquaintance approaching, whom, by his little waxcloth hat and his wooden leg, I had at once recognized as Maitre Berand, better known as Fait-tout. Berand was one of those equivocal traders who get a livelihood by various nameless handicrafts, and who, in common parlance, are said to live by their wits. He now assured me that business called him in the direction in which I was going.

I invited him to embark with me in the boat, which at that moment came alongside, He thankfully accepted my invitation, and I thus secured a companion, who, if not altogether trustworthy, was at least well acquainted with the country and its inhabitants, and who was, moreover, himself an interesting subject for my observation.

Immediately on leaving Maillepais, we found ourselves in the district familiarly known as *Marais Mouille*, and a wonderful spectacle it presented. As far as the eye could reach, it seemed as if it were a water landscape, whereon numberless islets fringed with willows and ivy, were floating; now and then we passed a larger one, on which hemp and flax were cultivated. On the most elevated point of these islands stand the solitary dwellings of the hutters; they are of plaited wickerwork, and look like so many beehives. They have neither window nor chimney, and the door appears too low for a full-grown man to enter without stooping.

We could generally distinguish a fire flickering on the hearth, and sending its smoke through all the interstices of the basket-work. The older huts are often covered with a mass of vegetation; and not unfrequently the willow wands woven into the dwelling bud and sprout, and form a thick green trellis-work of leafy branches around the hut. The people find their food in the waters by which they are surrounded, the neighbouring towns offering a ready market for their fish and ducks.

In winter, when the waters often rise to the level of their dwellings, the poor people are forced to take refuge, with their wives and children, in their boats, which are kept by them ready for such emergencies. In these, they frequently pass long days and nights, till the floods are abated.

As I wished to see the interior of one of these huts, we drew towards the shore and landed. The inside was incrusted with a black and shining coating of soot.

In the dusky background, two cows were lying down and chewing the cud at ease before a sort of rough crib. This was the only piece of furniture in the hut, with the exception of a pair of earthen pitchers, a clumsy stool and a hurdle covered with a layer of moss; on this lay a woman whose appearance showed her to be suffering from the biliary fever so common in this moist and fœtid atmosphere.

To our words of comfort she at first made no reply; but at length, rousing herself, she said:

"What good can anything do *me?* I have seen the *White Boat!* All I want is the priest."

These words had a startling effect, not only on the boatman, but on Fait-tout, notwithstanding his habitual readiness to parade his scepticism.

"'The White Boat!'" exclaimed both together, in a half whisper, at the same time looking towards the shore.

"Yes, yes," continued the sick woman, with feverish excitement: "I was coming with a bundle of willows from the other side of the island, and there, gliding noiselessly through the channel, I saw the death-boat, with the yellow dwarf seated at the helm; and as I passed, I heard him cough and groan; I felt his poison breath upon me, and fell to the ground. My husband found me and brought me home, and I have never raised my head since, and never shall."

I endeavoured to soothe the poor woman, and to explain the thing as an optical delusion; but she stared wildly into the darkness, and my companions slipped quietly away; I myself felt a sort of indefinable dread, thus left alone in the dusky hut with the dying woman, and hastened into the air.

When we got back to the boat, our conversation was in monsyllables; and to set it going, I made some inquiries respecting young Blaisot whom I was to meet at Marans. At the sound of his name, Fait-tout started from his reverie, but made as though he had not heard me, and called my attention to the great number of boats which were lying in a little bay which we were then crossing.

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We did not reach Marans till late in the evening, and there were no tidings of B'aisot at the inn. To my repeated and urgent inquiries, the host replied with a counter-question:

"Do you mean old Jerome Blaisot?"

"No; his son, Guillaume," said Fait-tout, answering for me, with singular emphasis.

"Guillaume?" repeated the man in astonishment.

"And why not?" I rejoined sharply. "I wonder what reason he can have for staying away?"

"I cannot say," replied mine host, with some hesitation, "how can any third person assign reasons for another? To-morrow is our market-day, and there will surely be some of Blaisot's people in town. You can ask them, sir, any questions you please."

"*Ask*, indeed!" muttered Fait-tout in a mocking tone as I moved away.

Marans, on the following day, was thronged with hutters, bringing in the rich spoils of fishing and the chase. Still, all my inquiries for Blaisot were unavailing; and the evident shyness in answering raised my previous uneasiness to the highest pitch.

On my return to the inn, I found Berand the centre of a wondering circle. He was tatooing an allegorical decoration on the arm of a sailor.

"Behold!" he said.

I finally took counsel with mine host, who advised me to proceed, in his conveyance, to the cottage of the Blaisots, which was about a mile and a half distant. Fait-tout would be my guide. In half an hour the matter was arranged and Berand and I set off. At sunset we reached Jerome Blaisot's cottage.

We approached the cottage. An elderly man appeared on the threshold, but, without responding to our greeting he turned and called "Loubette! Loubette!" A girl came out of the door behind him. I observed her awkward height and ungainly form, but not until I stood beside her did I notice the extreme strength and sweetness of her face. On my calling for her brother, the old man uttered a quick exclamation, but, silencing him with a glance, the girl said quietly:

"You are, doubtless, the gentleman whose letter we gave back to the postman two days ago?"

"Gave back again! And why did you do that?"

"Because he to whom it was addressed is not here."

"Nor in all little Poitou!" exclaimed the old man.

"But you know where he is," I rejoined; "you could have given the postman the necessary instructions."

"We know nothing," cried the father; "and he who says otherwise is no friend of ours. Guillaume is away on his own errand, without either consulting or revealing it to us."

"Yes, yes, father," interrupted the maiden; "you see that the gentleman meant well by my brother, and why then should you make a disturbance, or deny him? You will take some refreshment with us, sir?" And so saying, she covered the table, and thus diverted my questionings and my curiosity.

After a while, the old Blaisot appeared to have regained his self-possession, and to have formed some great resolution. He began by asking me my reason for coming, and my answers had the effect of quieting his suspicions altogether; and without any further allusion to his son, we talked of things in general, and then discussed the business I had in hand, and the conditions on which it should be executed.

By degrees, however, and with the deepening twilight the conversation flagged, and we sat in silence. Loubette went up and down the room, busied about the household matters, and often stood as if listening at the window; then she came and sat down with us again.

Suddenly a most strange and piercing cry, like that of a bird, sounded without. Both father and daughter started up, but each with a very different expression of countenance. He said, half aloud.

"It is the night-raven, and at so late an hour! That too, bodes no good."

She seemed to be listening intently; and, as three similar sounds were heard in quick succession, each drawing nearer, she said:

"A boat must have disturbed him in his nest. It is the sleeping time of beasts, but the eating time of men. If you please, sir, supper is now ready."

She had already lit the lamp, and we sat down to a table well provided with simple fare.

As the old peasant gradually thawed, and threw off his suspicion, I began to be quite comfortable; and only remarked after a while, that the girl, who had often risen from the table to see about one thing or another, as well as about my sleeping quarters for the night, had now absented herself altogether.

Fait-tout also withdrew, saying that he had business in the neighbourhood. So Blaisot and I remained alone.

The old man told me a good deal about his son—how brave, obedient, and ndustrious he used to be, and how he had been betrothed to a wealthy maiden of the district; who had been faithless to him, and taken another person—and how, since then, he had become altered in everything.

He was even going, in answer to a question of mine, to explain what he meant by this, when we heard heavy footsteps and the clattering of arms outside, and in a moment the door was opened, and the corporal of the gendarmerie of Chaille entered the room in full uniform, let the butt-end of his musket fall noisily on the floor, and greeted us in the peculiar jovial, free-and-easy tone belonging to his class.

Old Jerome rose, then sank down again as pale as death, when his son was called for.

"He is not here," he said brokenly.

"Then where shall we find him?" questioned the officer. "Your son is a *refractoire*; we have orders to arrest him, and the government has placed a fine upon his head. So you will not speak? Ah! I understand—it is because you are a traitor to the government yourself! Well, we shall see."

The old man declared in the most eloquent manner his attachment to the July dynasty, and his ignorance respecting any offence committed against any government whatsoever.

"Hold your peace, you old hypocrite," replied the soldier. "Do we not know you of old? Did you not do just the same when you were thirty or forty years younger?"

The poor man would, perhaps, have been able to bear all the threats against life and liberty, but the thought of being deprived of his goods and chattels by an execution awoke his covetousness—the hereditary vice of the peasants of Poitou.

"For goodness' sake, M. Durnad!" he piteously exclaimed, with clasped hands, "do believe me! My son has never returned home since——"

Here he stopped, having observed the scrutinising glance cast on him by the officer, who said:

"Your son was seen yesterday at Vallembreuse. It is likely that his father knows not where he passed the night! Enough prattle—I shall search the house!"

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Just then Loubette's voice was heard without, and one of the men who were stationed without, dragged her roughly in—she protesting angrily the while.

"Ah! Here we have the lady of the house," cried the officer, ironically. "Where dost thou come from at so strangely late an hour, my dear?"

"From a place where one does not say *thou* to girls one has not the honour to know, Monsieur!" Loubette answered boldly; "but since you would know, Monsieur, I have been taking the shepherd his supper."

The gendarmes at once confronted her—they had caught her coming from the very opposite direction. But Loubette was not to be confused by this. She asserted that she had gone round to the field where the sheep were feeding for the purpose of fetching the sickle, which she had forgotten at noon.

"Perhaps you may think that I wanted to cut bread with this," added she with a sneer, as she drew the sickle from under her apron.

The officer now tried to catch her by all manner of artful questions and assertions; but she parried them so well, that he began to contradict himself, and knew no longer what he was about.

"There's no catching the sly creature!" he exclaimed at last, in dudgeon. "Two of you stay here to watch these people, and the rest of us will rummage the whole place—he must be here."

The officer had taken no further notice of me than that implied in his first curt greeting, for he knew me before. But I plainly saw that he found my presence inconvenient. I followed him to the front door, and heard one of the gendarmes say to him: "Was not that a boat that glided over the water behind the bushes yonder?"

In fact, we soon heard the sound of oars, and the trilling of a cheerful song, then a scream, and a momentary silence; then some quick oar-strokes, a rustling in the thicket; and, an instant after, the vagabond Berand, my travelling companion, rushed towards the house, breathless, and evidently beside himself, and threw himself down upon the bank before the door.

At once assailed by the corporal, who not unreasonably charged him with being an old drunkard, he broke out into the following unconnected sentences:

"I have seen—seen him! There—there—I tell—I tell you. He glided in his white boat out from the bushes—and—and—under the trees opposite—and he was gone!"

"But *who*, in the name of all that is good?" screamed out the corporal in his impatience.

"Who? He! The White Boat, and the little yellow man at the helm! and he had a corpse in its white grave-clothes lying across the boat before him; its head was hanging over the water!"

"The wooden-leg is drunk!" laughed the corporal.

"Would that I had dreamt it, and were not sober!" said poor Berand. "But I have not only seen but heard. 'Turn back, unhappy man!' the figure exclaimed, 'or I will turn thee round and round.' The brandy still gave me courage to answer, 'Man or woman, whom hast thou there?' But it cried out in a voice that went through the marrow of my bones, 'I have got Guillaume to-day, and in eight days I shall have thee!' That was enough for me; and here I am, at least on dry land still; and in eight days I shall take good care to be far enough from here!"

Scarcely had the cripple named the name of Guillaume, than the brigadier hurried off, with an exclamation, to the canal, and all his party after him. We heard the click of their muskets as they cocked them in setting off; next, we heard the officer call out three times, and then a gun was fired; and, on hastening to the place whence the sound came, we found the gendarmes collected on the banks of the canal.

"If the little yellow man has escaped us, he has at all events left his freight behind him," called out the corporal, as he pointed towards a moonlit spot on the opposite side of the small canal which belonged to Blaisot's land.

With horror, we discovered a corpse stretched out at full length in the moonlight. The gendarmes brought out the boat in which our wooden-legged friend had just arrived, and went to fetch the body. Scarcely had they laid it down upon the dyke, than Loubette, followed by her father and their guard, rushed towards it, kneeling down to look at the face, and finding it unrecognisible through decomposition, snatched at the right hand of the corpse, and exclaiming "Heavens, it is my brother!" sprang up, and held out a ring to her father, naming the names of Guillaume and Louise inscribed on it, and a flaming heart between them.

After the first outburst of grief, the girl attained a remarkable degree of composure; though there was something overstrained and excited about it; and it was often interrupted by almost convulsive gestures, wringing of the hands and deep-drawn sobs. However, it was such as enabled her to give all the orders she deemed necessary.

Agreeably to her directions, the corpse was taken to an out-building near the house, to which Loubette made her escape as soon as she had, with inconceivable celerity, prepared everything against the arrival of guests.

The old father appeared quite broken down and childish with grief and horror; and, with lamentable groans, and unconnected cries, he meekly allowed himself to be led back to the arm-chair in his own room.

Either by the shot, or by the sort of presentiment or instinct which never fails to draw people to a place where a calamity has occurred, even before any definite tidings of it can have had time to reach them, a number of the country people of the neighbouring district were soon collected. Loubette was now busily occupied; for, according to the popular custom, which makes a death, as well as a wedding or a christening—joy and sorrow alike—a pretext for eating and drinking, she had to provide both food and liquor, during which task she seemed to be struggling rather with anxiety than grief. Old Jerome welcomed each arrival with loud lamentations, which did not, however, interfere with his activity in passing round the jug.

As soon as Loubette had attended to her guests, and especially seen that the gendarmes were favourably placed as regarded the cider-jug and the brandy-pitcher, she hurried out again and placed at the threshold of the little out-house, where lay the corpse, covered with a coarse linen cloth, two lighted candles, which were not rendered superfluous by the dawning light—for it was a dark corner enough.

The maiden was seated at the entrance with her head covered, and as one neighbour after another came in, she appeared neither to see nor hear, and kept all at a distance by the violence of her emotion; so that even those who would fain have taken a nearer look at the body, refrained from passing her. Each fresh comer was contented with a hasty glance and a murmured prayer and then withdrew.

The corporal, finding I had studied the law, had asked

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me to visit the body, and to draw up the *procès-verbal* of the finding of the corpse. Berand offered to assist me.

On the discovery of a *corps malheureux*—as a body whose manner of death is suspicious is termed in this country—it happens that the next of kin devolves the duties of preparing it for burial on an official styled the *grave-digger of the lost*, who is seldom a person of good repute, although the pay is excellent.

Fait-tout seemed, nevertheless, accustomed to the work, and his help was acceptable, for it was no pleasant task; and I wrote what he dictated in answer to my inquiries.

Of a sudden, as he was busied with the right arm, he burst into an exclamation of astonishment.

"What is the matter?" I cried.

"What is the matter!" he replied softly, coming nearer to me; "What do you see on this arm?"

"I see a tattooing mark, such as you were making to-day at the inn at Marans."

"Just so; the altar, the lily, the cross, and a cypher. Now, except the lad on whom I tattooed it this morning there is only one in all Lower Poitou who has that design on his arm; and that is, or was—not Guillaume Blaisot, but Pierre Sauvage, who was drowned a week ago, no one knew where, or how, and now——"

A half-suppressed scream prevented the completion of the sentence, and on looking round, we saw Loubette standing erect at the entrance, pale, and with dishevelled hair and flaming eyes, and her arm stiffly extended.

"Come hither, maiden!" he exclaimed, "your brother is alive! At least, this is no more he than it is the Pope of Rome."

But her emotion was at first too great for words; and when she did speak, the accents were not those of joy, but of anguish and terror:

"On thy life, say not another word! And who allowed you to meddle with the dead? What business have you here?" she added with a deep groan, at the same time approaching him.

I quieted her with a word of explanation and assurance. She grasped my hand, but cast a look of suspicion on my companion. The latter, after a short pause, during which he displayed more feeling than was his wont, exclaimed:

"Now, I see! You knew that it was not Guillaume?"

She nodded assent.

"You are a brave lass, and I understand the game; and may the dickens take me if I meddle or mar! I've no such liking for the bloodhounds, especially since the 'glorious days' in Paris yonder. So, my word upon it, I'm silent."

"Now I know the meaning of the bird-call," said I to Loubette; "a signal that Guillaume was there with the corpse, was it not?"

Again she nodded, and whispered, faintly smiling:

"He had most fortunately seen it lying in the mud at the border of a little creek two hours ago, and arranged it all with me. He is in concealment, while he is supposed to be dead, and the hue and cry is thus stopped. He hovers about here, as though Louise had bewitched him, and declares that he must speak to her once more."

She turned again to Berand.

"You will keep our secret?" she said, looking earnestly at him, and holding out her hand.

He was about to grasp it in his own, when he suddenly drew back, and exclaimed, angrily:

"Not so fast! Your fine brother, then, was the yellow dwarf with the hollow cough, and the corpse in his White Boat, who gave me such a fright as he chased me on the water? No, that was too much—that's not to be forgiven! To make such a fool of me and terrify me like a child with a scarecrow! We'll see what the corporal says to that game!"

Earnestly I strove to appease him; but, unluckily, another weight dropped into the wrong scale.

"No, no," said he; "what a fool I should have been! The Sauvages have offered fifty pounds for the body of their son, and I may as well have the reward as any one else."

He was rushing out, but she stood in the doorway, and placing both her hands on his shoulders, and looking at him with sharp and earnest gaze, while her cheeks glowed with excitement, she said, in a calm, but harsh and determined voice:

"Look well to yourself, wooden-leg; you have a choice to make. Are we in future to be friends or foes? Give me your word that you will say no more than you are asked, and from this hour you have a home in the house of the Blaisots—and you know the value of such a home to you and the like of you. Or say but a word, make but a sign—a gesture that may involve peril to my brother, and you have Loubette Blaisot for your deadly enemy,—and Loubette keeps her word for good and for evil. If *you* know it not, ask throughout Lower Poitou; and then, old man, ask yourself whether it can bring you honour or profit in this country to betray a loyal Vendean to the gendarmerie? Guillaume is *lost* if he is not dead! Do you understand? As to the promise of the Sauvages, the Blaisots can fulfil it as well."

A host of conflicting feelings was struggling in the man's breast. It was mortified vanity alone that had caused him to swerve from his original resolution, and he was able to estimate Loubette's gratitude, as well as her vengeance, at their proper value. He now put his hand into that which she held out.

"Done!—I keep counsel."

It was indeed high time that we came to an understanding; for all the neighbours had withdrawn, and the corporal had called twice; and scarcely had we again turned to the corpse, and Loubette resumed her attitude at the entrance, when he appeared and inquired if the deposition were not yet ready, as it was time he should be setting out. I hastily wrote the concluding words, and handed the document to him. He scarcely looked at it; and it was evident that the cider had done its work. Calling his men together, he departed with them and old Jerome, to make his deposition before the nearest magistrate.

No sooner had the tread of the gendarmes died away in the distance, than Loubette sprang to the back-door, and repeated the bird-call that I had head at the beginning of the evening. After a few minutes, in company with a young peasant, she walked into the room.

The resemblance between them was striking. He seemed a manly young fellow, and his face bore traces of the grief he had suffered through his faithless sweetheart. Loubette made us known to one another, and I immediately offered to take him with me to Marans, whence he could easily get across the country. He accepted my proposal with sincere thanks; and Loubette—bravest, strongest soul that I have ever known—rose and laid her arms about his neck: "You must go now!" she whispered; and I then saw that with him the light would go out of her life.

"My father!" whispered the young man. But Loubette shook her head, and without a tear in her

brave, beautiful eyes, with even a smile, to give him courage, on her lips, she pushed him gently out from the home they had always known together, out into the darkness and the uncertainty of the night.

Berand stayed to dig a grave in the garden; for the brigadier had decided that Guillaume had taken his own life, and could have no Christian burial. Guillaume took his seat beside me in the car, gathered up the reins, and we were off. We drove on for about an hour and a half, when he suddenly halted, and said:

"Excuse me, sir, I will not detain you, but I have business here hard by."

I represented to him the risk he incurred, and expressed my surprise at his having any bus ness that could hinder him for a quarter of an hour under such circumstances. It availed not, and he only entreated me to wait for him.

"Only ten minutes!" he exclaimed, with emotion. "It is no business—it is but a house—a look. I cannot leave the country without"——and he was gone.

I fastened the horse to a tree, and followed, to be at hand in case of trouble. He stood awhile beneath a tree that was growing out of the hedge which surrounded the garden. The window of a projecting angle of the building was just opposite, and doubtless he had good reasons for choosing his post. The curtains were drawn, and the inmates of the house seemed buried in sleep. The distant village clock struck three, and I thought it high time that we were again on the road.

I approached, and bade him be comforted, and take courage. He turned swiftly at sight of me, and his expression awed me; it was rather one of anger than of sorrow, with the same stern fixed look that he had in common with his sister.

"One moment more!" he whispered, softly. "She must know that I have been here, and then she will see how to settle it with her conscience. Yes, I hope she may learn that my corpse was found here!"

Just then a light appeared at one of the windows, and the wailing cry of a little child crept out on the still air of the night.

The young fellow beside me trembled, and the stern expression about his lips changed to one of pain. He looked at me helplessly a moment, and then he said, in a hushed voice:

"Louise! Ah, I did not know—Loubette did not tell me!"

"Come!" I said, touching his arm gently. "Come! For Loubette's sake you must be off!"

"True," he said. "It is all over."

He let go the bough, which swung against the window, and fastened the cravat round his neck; and in a few seconds was seated by my side, lost in thought, and rapidly urging forward the horse on the road to Marans.

He drew up at the bridge of Vix, and declared that his route now lay in a different direction.

I offered him the charge of a little farm in Touraine, if he would let me know where to find him. He was evidently grateful for my sympathy, but declined the offer, saying:

"It can't be; I must live as the rest do. To manage a farm properly, I must have a wife, and I could not think of that. Man must labour in the quietness and the peace of his heart and of his life, and that I cannot do. I should never see a gendarme without thinking he was seeking me."

"You are dead for the gendarmes, Guillaume, for all the world except Loubette and me," I replied jestingly. But the words made a painful impression on him.

"It were perhaps the best thing that could happen to me, for all of us—if it were true," he rejoined, gloomily. But recovering himself quickly, he imparted to me his plan, which was to seek a home with some friends in the Talmond country. I made some inquiries as to his means of subsistence; but he was shy, and broke off the conversation abruptly, saying that he had still far to travel and that people were coming in sight along the road from Marans. He was right. We had scarcely time for a brief farewell and a hearty grasp of the hand when he was lost to sight in an adjoining thicket and I saw him no more.

But among the bodies of those shot by the gendarmerie in the slight rising that took place soon afterward in La Vendée, on the appearance of the Duchess de Berri, that of Guillaume Blaisot and of his brave sister, Loubette, were found side by side.

Jasper Ropher.

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THE LIVING DEAD.

"WELL, of all the confoundedly dismal places, for a wait, this station annexes the biscuit!"

This was my impatient remark, when, on an unusually bleak night, in a more than ordinarily cold January, I found myself stranded upon the platform of Leytonside Junction, with two hours to drag through, before the coming of the next train to town.

Business connected with my calling—that of a commercial—had taken me to the obscure village, from which the Junction derived its name.

I was a traveller in biscuits, which perhaps had called forth my prior mentioned reference to the farinaceous article of diet, of which I was the purveyor.

The means of communication between Leytonside and the outer world were limited. I had proposed returning by a certain train; but a commercial "proposes" and a good customer "disposes"; as a consequence, I was driven by a heavily-fee'd, and slightly inebriated fly-man, at a break-neck speed, along the dreary, five-mile stretch which lay between the village and the junction, merely to undergo the vexation of seeing my train steam out of the station as I entered it.

In reply to my irritable query as to when was the next, the solitary official, who—like the gentleman immortalised in "The Yarn of the *Nancy Bell*" was—

> The cook and the captain bold,
> The mate of the *Nancy* brig,
> The bo'sun tight, and the midshipmite,
> And the crew of the captain's gig.

or in other words, was station-master, booking-clerk and porter combined—had replied politely: "The next up-train is twelve-thirty, sir!" which—seeing that the clock above my head pointed to half-past ten—scarcely required the deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes to enable me to arrive at the period of my stay, with a tolerable degree of certainty. The prospect of a hundred and twenty minutes perambulation, up and down the dismal, wind-swept platform, only relieved from total darkness by the feeble light of a couple of ill-trimmed oil-lamps—or, worse still, a seat in the bare shed, open to the front, with a fire, now in the very throes of dissolution, called by an imaginative Railway Company, a "General Waiting-room" was anything but encouraging.

The only touch of relief to the dreariness of the picture—although to me, it emphasised its misery—was the station house, into which the elderly official had turned to enter, at the departure of the locomotive. My question arrested him on the threshold.

With the handle of the half-open door in his hand, he gave me the information I sought.

As he spoke, I caught a glimpse of the interior—a room, half kitchen, half parlour, with a glorious fire blazing in the brightly polished stove, and a swinging lamp suspended from the white ceiling, casting its light upon a couple of old-fashioned armchairs, which stood invitingly, beside the burning coals. Involuntarily, I uttered the impatient remark, with which this narrative begins, at the same time casting a yearning glance towards the vacant seats.

The man heard the one, and saw the other. With a hearty hospitality, which made me ashamed of my petulance, he threw open the door, and invited me to enter.

"If you're not too proud, sir," he said, "come inside and take a seat. You'll be a deal more comfortable here, than in the waiting room. You see, we don't get much passenger traffic, on this branch, except on market days, so"—a merry twinkle appearing in his eyes—"we saves the company's coals outside, and makes up for it in."

"No, I don't suppose you get many passengers," I replied, going back to his former remark, and seating himself with a sigh of relief, and thrusting my cold feet forward close to the cheery blaze. "In fact, yours must be a lonely sort of life, altogether, living all the year round, at an out-of-the-way spot like this. Why, there are not a dozen houses within five miles of you."

He shook his head negatively—a tender look creeping into his eyes, and lighting up the wrinkled, weather-beaten face.

"It 'ud be a lonely life for some people,' he said "but lor bless you, not for me. I've got all the company I want, and am as happy as the day is long. You're right about the houses, though—there's only eight 'tween this and the village—and they ain't very close. But so much the better, say I, and if you'd gone through what I have, sir, why I reckon you'd say so, too."

His face paled beneath his tan, and with his big red handkerchief, he hurriedly mopped the moisture, which had gathered in great drops upon his forehead as he spoke.

Evidently I had touched upon some chord of memory which affected him strongly.

He caught my glance of eager curiosity.

"You'd like to hear about it sir? It's only a page

out of a poor man's life, but it will serve to while away the time, so I'll tell it to you.

"Thankee kindly, sir. It's long since I had a cigar—a clay pipe and a bit o' twist is all you can get down here. I used to get one given me now and again, at one time, though. That's when I'm going to tell you about.

"After you, sir. Thankee.

"I haven't lived down in these sort o' places all my life, sir. No, in my time I've seen as much as most. But I'd better begin at the beginning—I could always tell a straight tale best.

"Well, I was born on the rails—so to speak—for my father was a railway-porter, and mother was taken bad one day in the porter's room, when, as he was busy, she'd brought him his dinner. Seeing it was so, 'twas nothing but natural but as I should take to father's calling, just as the young ducks follow the old 'uns to the water. He was foreman porter on the London and South-Western Railway, at a place down in Hampshire, and I got took on under him. As soon as I was big enough, I started at cleaning lamps and doing odd jobs, till I was made full porter, at fifteen shillings a week.

"The signalman's cottage was next door to ours, and when his daughter Mary was sixteen and I was twenty, we kept company. She was the handsomest gal for miles around, and as good as she was handsome.

"Though you mayn't think it, to look at me now, sir, I was a well-set up, likely lad, too, at that time; so though all the lads in the country-side made up to her, she wouldn't look at none but me.

"We'd no idea of getting married for a long time to come, for we were both pretty sensible; and though we didn't say so to each other, we knew that fifteen shillings a week might fill two mouths, but it would be a tight pinch when it had to fill three or four.

"However, a couple of years later, I was sent for to Waterloo, which, of course, meant a rise of pay, and a deal more in tips. Then I began to look about for a little house, and by-and-by, me and my sweet lass was married.

"I did the best I could, but there ain't much choice for a poor man, near Waterloo, and the little crib I took was a four-roomed house in a dingy court just off the York Road.

"I was very proud of it at first, but when it was all ready, and I got a letter to say as Mary was coming, I began to feel different. I thought of the little cottage down in the country she was leaving—with the jessamine and honeysuckle all about it, and the smell of the gilly flowers coming through the windows, and my heart misgave me, that she would be sick and sorry to leave it for this.

"I needn't have feared though, Mary never seemed to notice the dirt and dinginess around. To her, the little shanty was a palace, because as she said, I was there to keep her company.

"And when she come to me—why, sir, she seemed to have brought all the brightness of the country-side with her! Yes! the dirty, brown sparrows on the roof seemed to put on brighter feathers, and sing the same merry songs as the mavises and the finches in the hedge-rows down at home.

"Ah! we was very happy, we was, and more happier still, when a year had gone, and there came a third mouth to fill. A porter's life on a big station ain't all beer and skittles, standing about in wind, and rain, and fog-oftentimes, carrying your life in your hands, coupling and uncoupling, when it's as much as you can do, to keep your feet on the frosty rails, and with the coupling hooks feeling red-hot to the touch. Yes a railway-man's money is hard-earned, I can tell you, and there ain't too much of it, when it's all told.

"Not that I ever grumbled, come hail or shine, when I thought of my sweet wife, and the wee bit of a babe at home.

"And the sight of that home, when I got there, clean as a new pin, you could have ate your dinner off the flagged floor, with my slippers warming on the fender and a tasty supper waiting for me in the oven, why, sir, I clean forgot then, as I'd ever knowed, what fog, and snow, and cold was. But, there, I go rambling on, and time's flying! Time and money they both fly, don't they, sir?

"Things jogged along like this, for three years, an' more, just the same, except that two more little strangers come along to make life happier still.

"Then all at once, a thing happened, which seemed to squeeze all the joy out of our hearts, and scrunch it up in a ball, and throw it away.

"Small-pox broke out in the court. One poor soul took it, after that, huddled together as we was, there was no chance for the rest, and one after the other, many among the neighbours was carried out, some feet first to the graveyard, and others, headforemost to the hospital.

"At the first scare, I said to Mary: 'For goodness sake, lass, take the kids, and go right away down to Hampshire to your father's, then my mind will be easy about you!'

"But, lor bless your heart! she wouldn't hear of it.

"'What, and leave you, Jim?' says she. 'You, as might get took, and me never hear a word of it, till you was carried to the hospital, or—Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy!' and she broke out, a sobbing and a crying, which said—more plainer than words, what she feared.

"After that, she cried a bit, and I kissed and fondled her, and she dried her eyes, and went on firm as a rock.

"'No, Jim, I'll never leave you, never! But, Jim, dear,' slipping her soft arm round my neck, while a far-away sort of look crept up into her eyes, 'you never knows what may happen, women is more given to taking these things than men, who are out and about. So promise me this, dear, if I'm took with it, as you'll send me to the hospital right away, for the children's sake and your own.'

"'Don't speak so, my gal,' said I, 'I can't abear to think on it,' my voice sounding hoarse and strange, and a great chill settling round my heart.

"Yet she made me promise all the same.

"So she stopped, while as the days went on and the disease spread and spread, I went to my work in the morning, never knowing what I should see when I come home at night.

"'Coming events cast their shadows before,' I've heard said, but I don't believe it, sir; for, one day, I'd come home from my work, feeling more hopeful than I'd ever done for weeks, when what should I see, as I entered the court, but the awful hospital van a-drawed up in front of our door. The sight of it made me gasp for breath, and I stopped where I stood, watching it, sort o' fascinated like.

"You might, mayhap, have counted forty, then come a 'tramp—tramp' down the stairs, and something was carried out huddled up in blankets—a bundle from which a flushed face looked out at me, with a pair of heavy eyes fixed longingly, pityingly upon mine.

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"'Good Heavens! It's Mary!' I cried. 'Oh, my poor lass! My poor lass!' and giving a great sob, I rushed forward to clasp her in my arms. Even then, it was me and the children she thought of, and she waved me back.

"'No—no, Jim! You mustn't, dear—you mustn't! Keep away for the children's sake and your own.'

"'Give me one kiss, lass, one kiss afore they take you away!' I answered, struggling to reach her.

"But somebody held me tight, and the door was closed upon her, and the van was driven out of the court.

"The neighbours told me that she'd been took in the forenoon.

"They wanted to send for me, but she wouldn't hear of it. So she'd made all arrangements herself, hoping the van would come for her afore I got back, so that I'd be spared the pain of seeing her go.

"Somehow, from the first, I'd little or no hope of her getting better—still, every minute o' the day, I was round at the hospital, seeking news.

"She wouldn't let me see her, though I sent message after message, begging and imploring her to let me come to the bedside, if only for a moment. And each time I went, I'd come back to our little home, with the pain at my heart gnawing deeper and deeper.

"Then came a blessed change. It was, I think, the eighth day after she was took, I'd gone as usual for news, and they said as she'd taken a great change, and the danger was past.

"I could have dropped on my knees, and thanked the Lord, there and then. Think of it, sir! Getting better after all my fears.

"The people must have thought me mad, as I walked home, for I went along singing aloud, and stepping as if I walked on air.

"It was a dark, miserable sort o' day, and I know everything must have worn a dreary, dirty sort o' look—but to me, sir, the world had never seemed so bright and beautiful a place afore.

"Another week slipped by—but so quickly that it was passed afore I realised it; for I had been busy buying little odd things, to add to her comfort, when she came back.

"Then came a letter, as said my Mary was dead. I can feel the shock of it now—now, when nigh on thirty years have passed.

"She'd had a relapse, they said, and died sudden. If I wanted to see her buried, I must come that very night. She was coffined down already.

"What followed, was like a terrible dream. Somebody got me a black coat and gloves, and put a band of crape round my hat; and that night, I stood by an open grave. Into it a coffin was lowered, and upon the breast-plate I read her name.

"Those, who stood round, tried to soothe me with soft words of comfort, but I spurned them all, returning to my empty home, with a cold, stony feeling at my heart—a feeling that all the days which lay before me, could hold neither joy nor sorrow again.

"I might have done something desperate then, but for a kindly neighbour's work and words. She had taken charge of the little ones, and she brought them to where I sat, staring with dry eyes into the dying fire.

"'See, Jim,' she said; 'Her little ones—hers and yours. You are all they have to look to, now. Bear up for their sakes!'

"Bless her! I believe she saved my reason, for now the salt tears came thick and fast, and flinging myself upon my knees, with my arms around them, I prayed for the strength I so sorely needed.

"Three or four days dragged on, which I'd lived through in a hopeless, broken-hearted sort of way.

"When one night—sitting alone—with the children in bed—the fire low, and the lamp—which I'd left untrimmed—dying out—the stillness of the deserted court without was broken by a step—a step, like that of the dear one, who would never put foot to the ground again.

"Thinking it was one of the neighbours—yet wondering which one had the light step of my bonnie dead lass—I went to the window, and looked out into the darkness.

"For a second I saw nothing, then out of the murky night a familiar form took shape.

"It stole, stepping noiselessly now, towards the window. Nearer and nearer, and yet nearer it came, till nothing but the thin glass separated us.

"Then when our faces almost met—the living within and the dead without—I uttered an awful cry of dread, for I felt that I was gazing upon the white face of my buried wife.

"I staggered back from the window, with my flesh creeping, and every hair bristling upon my head, feeling that my hour had come. A second later and the thing came towards me with extended arms.

"Overcome with a terrible fear I reeled back—back till the wall stopped me, and I could get no further. Upon that I must have fainted. I can call to mind a misty sort o' feeling coming over me, and then a fall.

"When I came to myself I was on the floor, and the kind faces of the neighbours were around me, and someone was whispering in my ear something about a sad mistake, and that there was a great joy to come.

"In a dazed sort o' way, I was asking them what they meant, when something betwixt and between a cry of joy and a sob came from behind the rest, followed by someone—a woman—springing to my side, and clasping me in her arms—the arms, whose touch I'd never expected to feel again.

"Yes, you're right, sir; it was Mary, my wife, who'd come back alive and well, after all.

"My girl had begun to mend so fast, after they told me, that they'd moved her into another ward, but in the hurry, forgot to take her name from the bed's head. Well, another patient, the same day, took Mary's place and it was she, poor soul, who died.

"But we'd both had enough of London slums, and I'd managed to do the superintendent a good turn once, so I persuaded him to get me shifted down here, and here we've been ever since, sir.

"Now you can understand what I meant, when I said, 'the less houses, the better for me.' They say, 'God made the country, and man the town,' sir, and I agree with 'em.

"Hallo! That's your train signalled! How the time has gone, to be sure! Thankee, sir, I'll keep 'em to smoke on Sunday.

"Come along, and I'll give you your ticket.

"Good gracious, lass! you most knocked your old man off his pins!

"Yes, the chicks are all right, never made a sound after you put them to bed.

"She means my daughter's youngsters, sir, who lives in the village, but the missus has 'em here most of the time.

"Beg pardon, but this is Mary, sir, or as I call her sometimes: 'The Living Dead.'

Hubert Bartlett.

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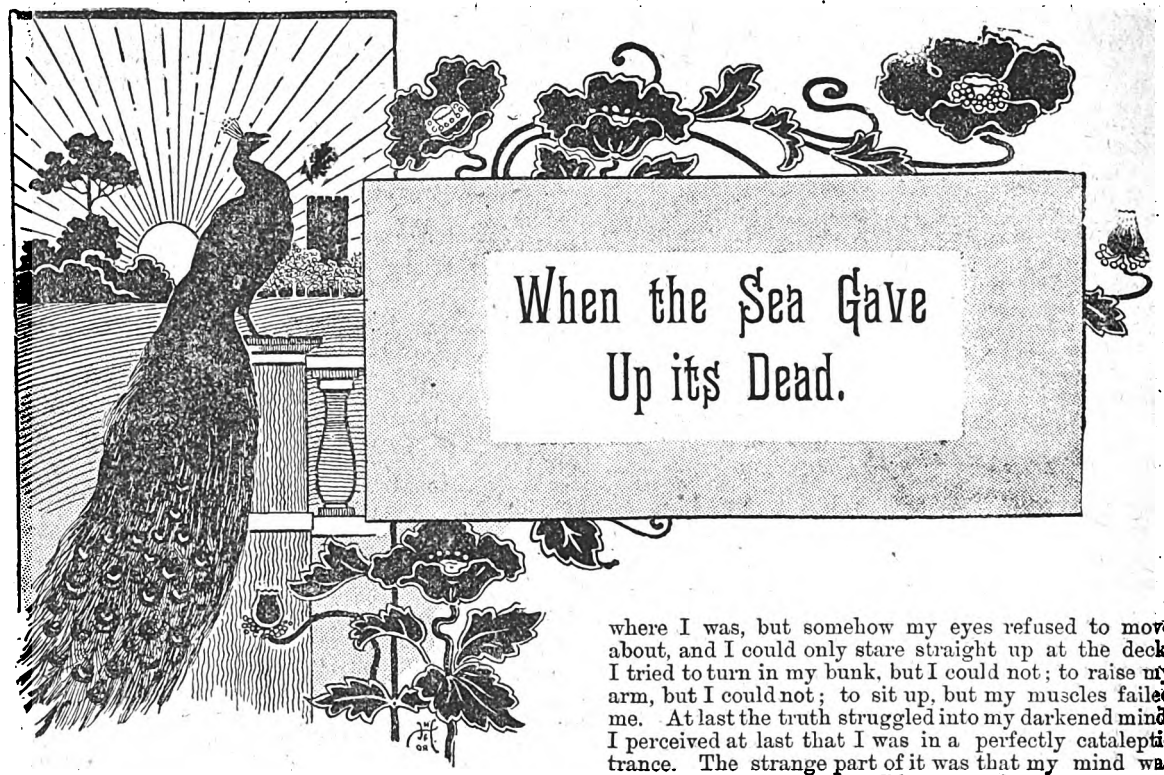


When the Sea Gave Up its Dead.

It was in my twenty-sixth year that my ship, the *Osprey*, owned by Fowler Brothers, was chartered to go to San Francisco for wheat. We arrived there safely, loaded wheat, and soon were outside of the Golden Gate heading for home. Everything went smoothly, and nothing occurred to forewarn me of the terrible adventure the future had in store for me.

We were to the southward of Valparaiso when I fell ill. It was a kind of faintness that would suddenly and without warning come upon me, so that I often fell on the deck and lay there until someone could come to my assistance. This continued without my getting much worse until we got down off the Magellan Straits, in the latitude of Cape Pillar, or thereabouts.

One day, a gloomy forbidding day, such as the mariner often meets with down there, I had the afternoon watch, and was superintending one of my men who was fixing a ratline in the weather mizzen-topmast rigging. The fellow was very clumsy, to say the least of it. I got annoyed watching his awkwardness; more annoyed, in fact, than was warranted, I think, now that I look back. But I was growing more and more irritable every day, which was probably owing to my fainting spells.

Suddenly I became so excited that I jumped into the mizzen rigging, and was into the top in a trice. I was about to pull the fellow away from his job when a fit came on. A sudden mist clouded my eyes. My senses left me; I reeled and fell from the top to the deck. In my descent I struck once or twice, which caused me to turn over, with the result that I fell on my head.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying in a bunk in the hospital. Still, there was a thick mist before my eyes. I could, indeed, see everything so as to recognise where I was, but somehow my eyes refused to move about, and I could only stare straight up at the deck. I tried to turn in my bunk, but I could not; to raise my arm, but I could not; to sit up, but my muscles failed me. At last the truth struggled into my darkened mind. I perceived at last that I was in a perfectly cataleptic trance. The strange part of it was that my mind was almost as active as ever. I knew all that was going on about me, and I felt an overwhelming terror at my possible fate.

It was soon made known to me. The Captain entered my room. I could hear indistinctly, as if it were afar off, his footstep on the deck. Then the steward also came in. I heard them consulting together, and both came to the conclusion that I was dead; that my neck was broken by the fall.

"Tell Sails to come in and take his measure. We must bury him to-morrow while the fine weather lasts," I heard the Captain say, and presently the sail-maker came in and measured me for the last hammock I should ever sleep in. I could not feel him, but I knew by his motions what he was doing.

I will not describe how they laid me out on the cabin table and left me there, while Sails, close by, made my shroud. Stitch, stitch, stitch went his needle, seeming to enter into my brain every time instead of the thick canvas. I can distinctly remember that while I lay there the steward tried to close my eye-lids, but they flew up every time and left me the poor consolation of seeing the preparations for my doom.

At last all was finished. The canvas was spread on the deck and I was laid in it. Then the sailmaker began to stitch me up. He had stitched all up but my face, when I heard him say he had lost his knife. A rigid search was made everywhere, but it could not be found, so Sails returned to work, and all that time I was thinking in my dull way what fools they were for not looking into my shroud for the lost knife.

As I afterward learned it was next day at noon that I was carried on deck and laid on a plank, preparatory to being shot overboard. The men one by one took a look at my face, and then it was covered up.

The burial service was read by the Captain, there was a little delay, and then the plank was tilted, and I shot into the bitter cold water off the Diego Ramirez. It must have been the shock that brought me to my senses for, as I sank down, dragged lower by the shot at my feet, I felt my feeling and action return. At the same moment my right hand, released from its dread inertia, grasped what I instantly knew to be a knife. Mechanically I forced the blade and ripped my canvas shroud so that the shot fell and I began to rise to the surface.

In a few seconds, I suppose, although it seemed years I opened my eyes—for it is a curious fact that while I lay in a state of coma they remained open, yet when my feelings returned with the shock I closed them at once—and saw once more the light of day, which I had never expected to see again.

I was an excellent swimmer, and had soon regained my breath and cast from me the canvas which impeded my movements.

Then I looked around over the waters, and saw that my miraculous escape had been all for nothing. The ship, looking like a great swan, was a long way off, getting smaller and smaller even as I looked.

There arose from my lips a frenzied oath against a providence that had abandoned me thus, but almost immediately afterwards, as if to rebuke me for my wickedness, I noticed a piece of wreckage floating towards me.

Hope once more filled my breast, and I swam toward the piece of deck-house, as it proved to be, and clambering on top threw myself on my face for very wretchedness.

Alone on the wide ocean, a piece of wood the only thing between me and death, dazed and weak from my last terrible experience, what else could I do but weep? Soon I began to feel an intense hunger. By the lowest calculation I must have been comatose for three days, so for that time I had had no nourishment.

The thick mist that suddenly came down satisfied my thirst, but there was nothing to eat. I nearly went crazy as the day wore on.

At last night fell and added the terrors of the blackness of darkness to the pangs of hunger. I could never tell the horrors of that first night. It was a wonder I was not stark, staring mad when day broke.

The second day passed like the first. Nothing to eat, something to moisten my lips, but no sail in sight. The third day broke with an angry sky and angrier sea, and I saw that before the day closed a Cape Horn gale would be raging with its attendant sleet and cold. I trembled then, for, even though I was almost dead and quite without hope, I wanted to live.

By noon the sea had risen tremendously, and it was with great difficulty that I managed to keep on my raft. By nightfall the gale was raging fiercely, and I was expecting every moment to be engulfed in one of the terrible abysses into which my raft slipped constantly.

This was the most awful night I ever spent—worse even than when I lay to all appearances dead on the cabin table of the *Osprey*. The flying spoondrift cut me to the bone. The great waves rolled their crested, phosphorescent heads high above me, who, sank in a black abyss, heard the gale shrieking overhead. I felt soon that it could not last much longer. Numbed and weak as I was, I clung to my refuge with the energy of desperation, and waited bitterly for death.

Finally an immense wave, higher than all that had gone before, raised its wild head and rolled down on me.

My time had come. I was swept like a child from my raft and carried on the crest of the monster, as I supposed, to death. But once again the hand of Providence was stretched out to save me. I was dashed with inconceivable violence against something solid as a rock. Ropes were floating all around me. I seized several, and then swooned.

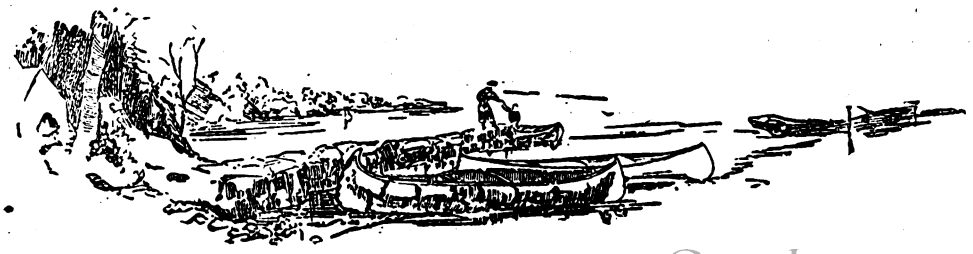
I awoke and recognised the old hospital of the *Osprey*. Then I thought my burial and subsequent adventures were all a wandering fancy, and that I had never left the hospital. But I was soon undeceived.

A kind face bent over me, and I saw once more the features of my good captain. He would not permit me to speak all that day, but on the next I was allowed to relate my story, which I did in a weak and quavering voice, I can assure you. Then the Captain told me that, after burying me, as they thought, they had kept on their course for two days, when they encountered a heavy head gale, which drove them back on their course again. They shipped a terrible sea, which carried away boats and houses forward, but it was the last exertion of the gale, for after that it died away.

When the waist was sufficiently clear of water to enable the men to walk there, they had discovered my body entangled in ropes lying in the lee scupper. At first they thought my corpse had been washed aboard again, as has been several times done, but on lifting me up they saw unmistakable signs of life, and with great awe and wonder carried me into the cabin.

As to my comatose sleep, the captain said he had never seen anything more like death. He had doubted if the most skilful doctors could have discovered any life in me. He was confident my neck had been broken.

J. C. Browne.



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SECOND INSTALMENT.

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey.

CHAPTER III.

MY acquaintance whistled as his eye fell upon Whitesock whose coat shone like satin in the light of the bogwood torch my hostess was carrying, for the night was falling rapidly.

"Dewi Sant!" he cried. "What horse iss this?"

His hands were soon running over her in a manner which showed that he knew what he was about.

"Ay, what bones!" he said. "And iss she so fast as she iss pretty?"

"More so," I replied; "but I should advise you not to handle her too freely. She will not take much of that from anyone but me."

As Whitesock now turned her head, and began to move uneasily, he let her alone, and stood biting his finger, and staring at her. I shook hands with the good woman of the cottage, gave a piece of money to the little boy, and swung myself into the saddle. I felt that my sword was buckled tightly, the hilt handy, and the butts of my pistols easily within reach.

I had no clear evidence for distrusting my companions, but I did so heartily, and for that very reason was determined to keep an eye upon them. I felt certain that the girls in grey had been packed off at sight of them, and I felt also that they were of another and a more dangerous class than the Egyptian and her dirty rabble.

For a couple of miles we moved but slowly, for the road was villainous underfoot. Indeed, my companion's nimble little pony, bred upon these mountain tracks, made better way than Whitesock, who was quite at a loss among the rolling pebbles and clumsy pieces of rock that littered the way.

Then the path improved, running over clear mountain turf, and, turning a spur of the hill, we rode into the light of the rising moon, now nearly at the full, and swinging low against a distant hill.

The harper was trotting beside my companion, and at intervals they exchanged a few words in a low tone. A turn of the road brought the moon at our back, and I was surprised to see a shadow fall between Whitesock and the pony. I glanced quickly round. Immediately behind us was marching a bareheaded, barefooted fellow with a pike over his shoulder, following with noiseless tread, and his eyes bent on the ground. The other two took no notice of him, but continued to talk quietly.

"Who is this man following us?" said I.

"Oh," said the bard, waving his hand, "it iss nothing. A friend to me."

I slipped my hand down to the off holster, dropped it on a pistol butt, and gently drew it to full cock. The action was well oiled, and worked smoothly, and amid the rattling of the horses' feet the soft click was, as I thought, unheard.

So far as I could see I was the only one in the party possessed of firearms, and to that extent I held them at advantage. I glanced again, and gave an involuntary start. A second pikeman was trotting at the side of the first. How or from where the fellow came I could not divine. If spirits of the dead had been rising to join us they could not have come more silently, or held their way with softer footfall.

He also had no other head covering than a shock of hair, and his feet were bare. Both had that bounding movement which betokens surprising strength and activity, and I

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scarcely knew what to think of the company into which I had so strangely fallen. That they were honest I had great doubts, and I had a mind to give Whitesock a hint and leave them but that the road had now fallen very bad again.

Marching with my beard upon my shoulder, as the saying goes, I saw the third pikeman arrive. Just as we passed a great boulder lying on the edge of the road he glided from its shadow and fell in at the rear. He was as like his fellows as one bean resembles others.

Not a word or sign was exchanged among any of them, and with the queerness and odd danger of it all a cold sweat came out upon me. This was another business altogether to keeping an eye for a few miles upon the bard and the dwarf. Our path now lay along the lee of a hill which cast a dark shadow over the rough, broken road.

Without looking round the tall man gave a shrill whistle. I half drew my pistol, but the signal was not aimed against me. At a flash the three pikemen sprang forward, running swiftly and silently, and flew on ahead, the dwarf running with them. I urged Whitesock on, impelled to follow them and see what was their object, but I was compelled to rein in almost instantly. I should only have lamed the poor lass among the loose cluttered rocks, and then things would have been at a worse pass still.

"Come, come," said my companion, who had sent his pony along with me and drawn rein when I did; "indeed you are not treating me fairly at all. To cock your pistol and hold it ready when we are riding together so friendly as possible iss not showing any trust at all. Do you think that I would set those boys against you when you had a good chance to kill me this afternoon, and did not do it. To be sure, I would not. And, indeed, I am wanting no help against any one man in this world," he added proudly.

To these remarks I had no answer to make, and we rode for some time in silence. The dwarf had left his harp behind, and my companion fingered it as he rode, now and again humming or trying over an air as if he had forgotten my existence.

The young lady and her attendants ran strongly in my mind. How far had they got ahead? What was the meaning of that little elf and the three nimble fellows running forward like greyhounds? When we reached the top of the long rise and came into the moonshine again I found to my joy that the road was clean underfoot, and touched Whitesock with my heel. She broke into her long, easy trot, the little pony at her side stretching away at the gallop, and we went perhaps three miles before we were checked again.

A little more picking of the way, and, on turning a corner, behold a light, shining as from a casement, half a mile ahead. It was the inn, and, as we rode up, I glanced eagerly through the uncurtained window. In front of a huge peat fire stood the dwarf looking round with a spiteful smile upon three or four frightened looking country fellows who were seated upon a long settle.

As I gazed, one of them rose and went towards the door. The dwarf made a gesture as if ordering him back, and the man returned and sat down without dispute. There was no sign of the forms for which I looked, but they might easily be elsewhere, nor could I see any trace of the pikemen. My companion sprang from his pony and ran eagerly into the house. Upon the other side of the yard was an open door, and inside a lantern dimly burning.

Without dismounting I turned Whitesock towards it and thrust in my head. It was the stable, empty but for two ponies, and those, as I saw at a glance, larger than the animals for which I was searching.

I drew the right hand rein and rode softly back to the highway. I felt perfectly certain that the pikemen were somewhere in front of me with their prey, and after going gently for a hundred yards over a soft, muddy piece I gave Whitesock her head.

For a single field's length from the inn the land was inclosed, then the road was as usual, over open mountain, and here the smooth, springy turf ran to the edge of the way. Turning Whitesock to the turf away she went at a gallop, her head down, her big, keen, bright e[illegible] every yard of the path.

The moon was now well up, and poured [illegible] like day through the thin, clean, frost[illegible] upright in the saddle, left searching ou[illegible] mare, and kept a look-out in front and

I drew a pistol and fired it over their heads.

I had gone thus for perhaps a mile when I fancied that I heard a faint sound as of a clinking hoof. I pulled up at once and sat listening. It came again, and clearer still now that the soft thud of Whitesock's feet upon the turf no longer filled my ear. But it came from a point to the left of the road, from a direction where a sharply rising hill thrust itself so far into the sky that the moon had only just cleared it, the rim of the yellow disc resting on the crown of the ascent.

Clink, clink again—certainly the rattle of ponies' feet over a stony patch, and now there rose straight up against the moon a bunch of figures. They were in view a mere instant, just as they crossed the ridge. It seemed as if the hill thrust them out, then drew them in again. I never doubted for an instant who they were, and turned Whitesock up the rise, which she climbed with easy stride.

As we neared the top of the hill I sprang down and led her a little to one side of the stony patch which I saw shining white before us. The other side of the hill lay in full moonlight, and, peering over the crest, I found myself gazing down a long, gentle slope, the dark patch of moving figures some distance away. I climbed into the saddle again and went down upon them at a swift canter. As I drew near I saw two ponies, each with a female figure seated upon it, one ragged pikeman walking between them holding a rein of each pony, the other two marching on either side.

With the advantage of my horse and weapons I had but little uneasiness as to driving the rascals off, but, as it happened, the task turned out very simple, for they were singing or rather chanting a mournful, wailing air as they marched, and I closed upon them unnoticed, Whitesock moving as lightly as a hare over the soft, springy turf. The man on the right hand carried a pike on either shoulder as his fellow between the ponies had both hands occupied. I therefore marked the left hand pikeman and drove the mare down on him at a swinging gallop.

I was within twenty yards of them before they turned their heads. They raised a cry of triumph, thinking doubtless that I was the tall man, their leader. The cry was hardly out of their throats when Whitesock struck the pikeman like a thunderbolt and hurled him a dozen yards, her knees as she rose to the gallop picking him clean off his feet.

At a touch of the rein she wheeled round, but in that mere instant much had happened.

The fellow in the middle had dropped the reins and leapt for his pike.

The captives had risen instantly to the situation, and made a dash for freedom, and I turned to confront two sturdy fellows, their pikes ready for action, and to see the ponies scouring away to the right to regain the road.

As I had no fancy for pinking Whitesock's satin coat upon those keenly whetted points I rode round them and followed the retreating couple. I looked over my shoulder to find the spearmen bounding after me like greyhounds, and the third man slowly getting to his feet. I drew a pistol and fired it over their heads. They took the hint, and drew off at once. In three minutes I was up with the flying figures.

"Do not press your animals too hard," I cried. "You are safe now, I think. Those fellows are not following us."

They drew rein, greatly to the relief of the panting little creatures under them, and we went at an easy pace up the last stretch of the long slope.

"You have come to our rescue once more, and we thank you again and again," said the nearer rider. "We seem fated to get into difficulties on this journey."

"It is traveller's luck," said I, "and in these unsettled days one cannot be surprised at at any length to which the daring of these rogues and footpads carries them. But who were these men?"

"I am not entirely sure," she replied, "but I believe we have fallen into the danger against which—" she paused for a moment, then added—"the danger of which we heard in the town."

"You were very kind," said I, "and I see that you had great grounds for that of which you spoke. I do not see your man. Has anything happened to him?"

"No," she replied, "we left him behind this morning. He was still suffering from the ill-effects of yesterday's adventure, and I bade him remain and rest for a day or two; and, besides, a packet had not arrived which we expected, and he will stay for that."

"This does not seem a safe country to travel alone," I remarked.

"Siani and I have travelled it scores of times," she returned; "it has always been perfectly lonely and safe. These men have made their appearance altogether of late."

I asked as to the manner in which they had been attacked, and found that they had been set upon near the inn with such skill and suddenness that resistance was impossible. No harm had been offered them, nor had anything been taken from them, but the pistols, and Siani had lost her knife.

"This does not seem like common thieves," said I. "They would not forego such an opportunity for plunder. But you saw the leader of them. He was sitting in that cottage when you appeared in the doorway, and the dwarf rogue, who was one of the party attacking you, was seated between us."

"And were you there?" she said. "I saw some figures about the fire but the light was so bad that I could distinguish nothing clearly."

I narrated my adventures of the day, and both listened attentively.

We had by this time reached the road and were marching steadily forward. The place for which I was bound lay a day's journey beyond the inn which I had lately left. It was clear, however, that my companions knew the country well, and doubtless they were pushing on now for other and safer quarters, so I moved contentedly with them.

"There is some noise," said Siani in her odd-sounding English.

We drew rein at once and heard the clatter of hoofs pounding along the road behind us.

"It sounds as if we are pursued," said I; "ride quickly on, and I will check them and then follow you."

"Nay," said the young lady, "let us ride faster."

"You cannot ride fast enough to escape," said I; "those horses are fresh by the galloping, and your ponies are nearly used up now."

"And you also have been travelling all day," she said.

"You do not know Whitesock," I laughed, patting the good mare's neck. "Besides, I am quite safe. Do not fear on that score. I do not believe they have pistols, and I will take care they do not close with me."

"They may have mine," said the young lady.

"And if they have," I returned, "mine carry twice as far and a heavier ball. I can turn them easily enough. But pray ride on. We are losing precious time. If any accident should happen you will have but a poor start as it is."

Siani now added her entreaties to mine and at the same time flung her cloak about her young mistress.

I then saw for the first time that the lady had lost her cloak.

"No, no," she said. "Siani——"

"Stay," I broke in, "the matter is easily arranged. Siani shall wrap herself in my cloak and leave me the freer for my work."

I stripped off my cloak, tossed it to the waiting woman, who wrapped it snugly round her in a couple of turns, and away they went.

The moonlight shone in the bright, dark eyes and pale, beautiful face turned back towards me as they rode off, and I waved my hat in gay confidence.

A man came out of an outhouse with a lantern in his hand.

CHAPTER IV.

I MEET OWAIN VAUGHAN.

I TURNED Whitesock and moved gently towards the approaching horsemen in order to give as much ground as possible to the fugitives, but to my surprise the sound of hoofs had died away.

I pulled up and sat listening for a moment, and heard them again. The riders had stopped to water their horses at a little stream which I remembered passing some distance back. This did not seem very much like a pursuit, and I cantered sharply down towards them to settle the matter.

At thirty yards distance I checked Whitesock and challenged the two horsemen coming up the hill. They halted at once and called upon me in the language of the country. Perceiving they were not the men I expected, I spoke to them in English, and advanced in their direction, but they, wheeling their horses round, and clapping in their spurs, returned down the hill at full speed.

"'Tis a false alarm," thought I, trotting back, well pleased at the outcome of the affair. "They are two fellows who have escaped from the inn and got to the nags I saw in the stable."

I pushed on rapidly to regain my companions, but I was not to do so, for I fell into a mistake easy to be made among such rude tracks as I was following. But a few hundred yards from the spot where we had parted, the chief road took a sudden bend to the right and seemed to disappear down a narrow gully, yet straight on ran a road, white in the moonlight and, to be sure, no one would have any suspicion that in following it he was going directly out of his way and merely heading for a lonely farm far among the hills.

This was what I did, and on I went for three or four miles, thinking to see the ponies at every turn of the road, yet seeing nothing.

When I became convinced that I had missed them in some fashion, for at the pace I had ridden I knew that they could not be before me. I was puzzled what to do. I still felt certain that I was following the main road, for I had ridden past the mouth of the gully into which it turned without a glance aside, and after a little thought I could see no better plan than to pursue my journey. Three miles further the road turned directly into one of those narrow valleys with steeply sloping sides, such as the Welsh call a *cwm*, and ran up the middle of it. The sides of the valley were dotted with sheep, and I looked eagerly forward for some habitation.

Soon I saw a light at the head of the glen where the hills seemed to close in upon either side. I came nearer and saw something white stretching across the road. I cantered up and found myself staring across a gate into a farmyard, where the road abruptly ended and, facing me, a long low white-washed house through whose naked windows a bright fire-light was streaming.

At this moment a man came out of an outhouse with a lantern in his hand. I hailed him and he came towards the gate. Luckily he had a little English and at once told me where I had gone wrong, assuring me that it was no uncommon misfortune, so easily was the road missed at that point.

He hospitably desired me to come in and stay, and knowing that Whitesock had earned her rest, and it would be better to make a fresh start with the daylight. I thanked him, and rode through the gate which he unbarred.

He led the way back to the building from which he had come, and helped me to attend to the mare, and then led the way to the house. The door opened directly to the kitchen, where a cheerful fire was blazing and his wife and two or three children were gathered round it.

The universal and cheerful hospitality of the Welsh was busied at once to make me comfortable. I was placed in a chair in the snug chimney-corner, and the good wife at once set a small round table at my elbow, and arranged food upon it. No one had any English except my host, and his was not so fluent but that occasionally we arrived at cross purposes. Still, when we came to a fix, we tried back and started again, and in the end managed to find where we were.

"Nont y Boyn," he said, on hearing of my destination, "I am taking sheep to-morrow, and must to go that way. We shall go, the two, now."

This was welcome news to me when I found he was bound to a spot within a few miles of my journey's end, and I gladly agreed to accompany him.

The next morning I arose to find that the fine weather of the past few days had departed, and that a sharp, sleety drizzle was falling. As I stood looking at it through the window of the great kitchen, my host joined me.

"Where is the big coat with you?" said he. "Spoil the fine clothes, this weather," and he rubbed his finger, smilingly, up and down the silver lace of my riding suit.

"Oh!" I replied, "perhaps it will get better soon!"

"No," said he, decisively, "it shall go worse and worse through the day. I am sure of it. But, no matter, I will find to you a coat."

He said a few words in Welsh, and his little boy ran out of the house to return in five minutes laden with a great blue-grey homespun coat, quite new and of a texture to withstand the fiercest storm that ever blew. He explained that it was borrowed from his shepherd, who would not be going from home that day.

At once upon seeing it I formed a design of purchasing it, as I knew not now when I should see my cloak again and the shepherd was fetched to strike a bargain. This was easily

done to his great satisfaction, and I rode away that morning across the hills fenced as securely from the biting, driving sleet as if I had been in a castle.

Our progress was very slow, since it was timed to the pace of the slowest sheep, and when we came to the hamlet where my guide was to deliver his flock, the dusk was falling.

There was no inn at the place, but one of the houses provided some accommodation for travellers and I determined to stay rather than push on for Nant y Bryn in the darkness. My kind friend spent the night there also, and the next morning we parted, with hearty expressions of goodwill on both sides. He had given me such particular direction for finding my way that I doubted not but an hour's ride would see the end of my journey.

I had gone some two miles on my way, and was crossing a patch of broken, heathy land, when I saw another horseman some distance away to my left. He was following a road which gradually ran to meet mine, and step by step we drew nearer, like men marching down the arms of a great V.

He was a young man, looking much of my own age, riding a tall, thin, black horse of no great quality, handsomely dressed, and carrying a sword, but as far as I could see, no pistols. He looked me over with an air of great superiority for which I could see no grounds, till I remembered myself of the coarse grey coat I was wearing.

We reached the meeting-place of the two roads within half-a-dozen yards of each other, he in front. He spoke to me in Welsh and I bade him good-morning.

"You are English, then," said he coldly.

"I am," said I, "and have no Welsh."

All the time his eye was running over my mare, and he drew his horse away to put the whole width of the road between us.

"Does he take me for a highwayman?" I thought, and I smiled, for my combination of coarse grey coat and a nag under me fit for a prince certainly pointed in that direction, had we been on a more travelled route.

In this smile I managed to displease him, for it timed with a false step of his sorry horse, and he thought I laughed at him.

The colour shot up into his thin, dark, handsome face, and his big, black eyes flashed at me fiercely. I looked before me as if I had observed nothing, and now saw, a mile in front, a large house standing halfway up a steep slope.

"Is that Nant y Bryn?" I asked.

"It is," said he, "and who are you travelling this countryside, who do not know Nant y Bryn?"

"A stranger," I replied, "from afar."

"From what part of England?" he demanded, abruptly.

"From Worcestershire," said I, by no means relishing the tone he adopted toward me.

"Worcestershire," he repeated, with an increase of bitterness in his tone. "And what may be your business at Nant y Bryn, my good fellow from Worcestershire?"

"You take a strange way of your own at getting at a stranger's business," I replied. "A little more civility would not come amiss."

"And who art thou, to teach me how I should speak to an English hog?" he cried, hotly. "Dost wish to taste my whip?" And he threatened me with his riding cane.

"Why," said I, "this is a storm all about nothing. I have given you no offence, and to call names and talk of whips is hardly the thing between gentlemen."

"Gentlemen, Greycoat," sneered my companion. "Pray what dost thou mean? Did anyone ever see a gentleman in such a churl's dress?"

"Easily," said I. "You have for one. I know not who you may be, and care not; but under this grey coat runs as good blood as your own, and I advise you to drop this hectoring tone."

My companion reined in his horse and extended his hand towards me.

"Is it possible," he said in a quiet bitter voice, "that I have had the luck to drop across a man from Worcestershire who has a gentleman's right to wear a sword?"

"Certainly," I replied. "And one perfectly willing to use it upon cause shown."

"Enough said," he answered, and dismounted. He turned to me and raised his hand. "Before Heaven," he declared, "it is ample reason for me that you are English and of your county. I want no other inducement to spill your best heart's blood."

Now, though his words were very foolish and vapouring, yet it was plain that he was deadly in earnest, and I came down, and led Whitesock to an ash sapling behind a thick patch of brushwood.

"This is a cheerful country for a traveller," thought I. "If I am to fight for my life every day because I am English, I wonder of how many swords I shall run the gauntlet."

"Why are you hiding your horse away like that?" he asked as I returned.

"Content you," I replied. "It is for your benefit. If she should see us at close quarters, nothing would prevent her from running in and trampling you underfoot."

"Why, that is like a dog," he cried.

"She has the sense of one, and more," I returned, stripping off my coat. But my companion lingered for a moment.

He had passed, at a flash, as is the custom of these people, to another set of feelings upon my speech.

"I fear I have made a mistake," he said.

"You have," said I, "a great mistake, to treat me as you did. But you have gone too far with it to turn back."

"Who wishes to do so?" he screamed rather than spoke in reply, and his former bitterness returned with ten-fold heat. We took ground upon a triangular patch of turf where two roads forked apart, and he led the attack with much skill and fire.

But after a minute of the swift interchange of thrust and parry I felt but little uneasiness. He was not to be compared for an instant with his countryman of yesterday, and furthermore though well trained to his weapon, he lacked experience in the point where it is most needed, in the use of it in deadly combat.

It is one thing to play with the buttoned foil where a hit or miss is a matter for laughter or a trifling wager; quite another to know that a terrible penalty will be given or exacted for a false stroke, a slip, a miscalculation.

I knew this by observation of the dreadful pitch to which his nerves were strung; his mouth was a round hole through which his breath came in whistling gasps, his face was streaked with red and white, and his eyes burned like fires in his head.

I have seen a fellow fighting in sheer fright for his life look much the same, but there was no fear about my opponent. It was the vivid imagination in which these people abound, painting before his mind that which a deadly combat means to the last stroke and furthest reach of the picture.

We English people are lacking in this perhaps, but as by the same lack we keep cool and watch the other man's point with nothing to distract us, in the end we are the gainers.

At the end of three minutes there had been much clashing of swords, thrusting and parrying, but neither of us had received a scratch. As to my share of the encounter, it had been confined strictly to the defensive. I was now certain he could not, except by an accident, pass my guard, and I charged my play carefully, aiming to disarm him.

But I had to be very wary, for he was agile as a panther and, his blood boiling savagely within him, would have spitted me with the best will in the world. I was pressing upon him steadily, when our combat was interrupted in a fashion oddly the counterpart of my encounter of the previous day. A sudden weight was flung upon my sword arm and I felt myself gripped from behind. Catching me

all unawares at a moment when I was balancing myself to reach forward, I slipped and fell to one knee. My opponent bounded forward, too furious to see more than the chance that was offered him, when a female figure leapt between us, crying: "No, no, Owain! It is he! Do not strike!"

Owain checked himself, dropped the point of his sword, and stood motionless. I rose and bowed to my young lady of the road.

CHAPTER V.

Nant y Bryn.

"I did not recognise you," she said breathlessly; "I saw nothing but Owain for the moment. He looked dreadful. He is my brother."

"Blue and silver," said Owain. "A bright bay mare with one white stocking. It has been a mistake indeed. Sir, I own myself in the wrong and ask your pardon."

So handsome an apology cleared every score between us, and we shook hands heartily. At this instant an old gentleman with silvery hair came round the clump of hollies behind us, saying as he came:

"Where are you, Enid? Where have you run? Ay, ay," he continued as he came forward; "What is this? Two young fellows with jackets off and drawn swords, and no breath to spare between t. em. Pray, Owain, who is this stranger with whom you have been fighting?"

"I do not know," said Owain.

"Come, sir, who are you?" demanded the old gentleman, turning briskly upon me. "You smile, do you, and truly there is something familiar in it. Declare yourself."

"Well, uncle," said I; "you ought to discover something familiar about your nearest relation."

"So you are," he cried, "I see it now, Geoffrey Heathcote."

"At your service, uncle," I replied.

"It is ten years since I saw you last," said my uncle, welcoming me effusively, "and it is not easy at a glance to see the lad of fourteen in the young fellow of four-and-twenty. But you are welcome, indeed, to Nant y Bryn. These, also, are of my name and family, Owain and Enid Vaughan," he continued, introducing the young lady and her brother, "but how you came point to point with Owain, at such short notice, hot as he is, passes me altogether."

"Say nothing of it, Sir Arthur," broke in Owain Vaughan. "I was in the wrong, and I beg to thank Master Heathcote for the great help he has rendered my sister within the past two days."

"So you are he, too, nephew," said my uncle. "Well, well, how queerly things turn out. But we'll get home and you shall tell me all the news."

I fetched Whitesock, and we moved up the road together towards the house, talking of Butley Croft and Worcestershire affairs.

My uncle, Sir Arthur Vaughan, was my father's half-brother. My grandfather was twice married, first to Margaret Lathrope of a neighbouring family, secondly, to Letitia Vaughan, a Welsh lady.

Of each marriage there was one son, and, as my father did not marry until late in life, Sir Arthur had lived many years at Butley Croft on the footing of heir-apparent.

"No, no, Owain! It is he! Do not strike!"

Not long after my birth, his maternal grandfather died, Sir Lewis Vaughan, of Nant y Bryn, and as his mother was an only child, Arthur Heathcote departed for Wales, took the maternal inheritance and name, and was lost to Worcestershire.

My father joined the King's forces and was killed in an attack of the Parliament troops upon a fortified house in Warwickshire, into which a number of Royalists had thrown themselves; my mother died within two years afterwards and I had been left to the care of my grandfather, who lived to a very advanced age. He had now been dead some years and practically I had been master of Butley Croft since I was of any age capable of understanding a little of affairs.

As we walked on, the narrowness of the road parted us into couples, and my uncle lagged a little behind.

"By your appearing in this sudden and secret fashion, nephew," said he, "I judge that you are flying from something."

"You have hit it exactly, uncle," I returned. "It is the old cause."

"It is so?" said Sir Arthur. "What's on foot now?"

"You must know," I began, "what excitement and uneasiness are prevailing throughout the country at present. There are many who believe that the power of the Parliament army is running to a close, and on all hands men are thinking that the sun is about to turn on our side of the hedge."

"I hear but little of these matters," said my uncle. "We are out of the way of news. Tell me everything."

"Willingly," said I; "so far as I know of matters. This unrest and the general dislike of the country being dragooned by men who know nothing of the proper arts of government are leading to many plots being formed against the present

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authorities, and partisans of the old cause are banding together in hopes of striking a blow to better things."

"And you have been mixed up with one of these affairs?"

"I have," said I; "but there was a traitor among us, for I had a word by a sure hand to tell me that Sir John Postgate knew everything and was taking measures to lay us by the heels."

"Sir John Postgate," said my uncle; "that bitter old Independent fellow. Is he still alive?"

"He is, indeed," I returned. "And as active as ever. I took the road within two hours, and, after making a long loop to throw off pursuit, headed for your mountains."

"'Twas impossible to do better," said Sir Arthur. "You are safe here as man can be. If it was known where you were, no force could come through the hills without our being aware of it, and you have only to march half-a-mile beyond Nant y Bryn to have thirty miles of hiding places open to you."

I thanked him and we were by this time in front of the house.

It was a huge building, very broad for its height, and constructed of squared masses of the dark grey stone which the neighbourhood yielded plentifully, the windows small, with the lowest a good height from the ground and heavily ironed, the door of three inch oak, studded with stout bolts and nails.

"You will think Nant y Bryn a mere dungeon, I fear, after our beautiful Butley Croft, nephew," said Sir Arthur, waving hishand to wards the gloomy pile; "but it was built at a day when men looked more for strength than comfort, and perchance we may need its strength once more."

"Ay, ay," said Owain, for we four were together again, and the young lady looked grave.

My uncle blew a call on a shrill whistle which hung from a button of his coat, and a man appeared from within. Whitesock and the black horse were handed over to his care, and we entered a large, ill-lighted hall. My uncle at once carried me to his library that we might finish our conversation. It was a long, low room, one wall more than half covered with books, a dozen volumes scattered about a broad, oaken table, and near the hearth, a great elbow chair into which he dropped, and stretched his feet towards the ample fire of logs and turf blazing on the wide hearth.

"So you must keep out of the way for a few months, nephew?" said he.

"More than that, uncle," said I, "if I am to save my neck."

"Pooh!" laughed Sir Arthur. "You young fellows put too much importance on your escapades."

"Third time pays for all," said I.

"What do you mean?" asked my uncle.

"First," said I, "I was with Penruddock."

"In '55," cried Sir Arthur, "you, a boy!"

"I was nineteen," I returned, "and as tall as I am now. A dozen of us rode down south from Worcestershire."

"What followed?" demanded Sir Arthur.

"Nothing, so far as I was concerned," said I. "We paid our tenth to the major-generals, but, of course, so did the rest of the Cavaliers."

"And next?"

"I was with Sir George Booth, last summer at Chester."

"I see," said my uncle "you've had practice before at running away."

"From Winnington Bridge, you mean?" said I. "Yes; Whitesock carried me through the fight, and then thirty miles from the field before I drew rein. I got clear by forfeiting The Chase and Copp's Holding."

My uncle raised his hands and let them fall. "The Chase and Copp's Holding," he groaned, "I would exchange my waste of barren hills for the rental of either. Nephew, I have done wrong to desert Butley Croft for so many years. You will dash the estate to pieces."

"Sir Arthur!" I cried, "would you have me idle when such things were in train? How could I hang back? Why, there are others who have lost all for the King."

"And it is likely you have lost all, too," said Sir Arthur, looking venomously upon me. "Do you think they will forego such a goodly chance as this?"

I stared at my uncle in astonishment. I had supposed our family to be imbued through and through with the principles in which I had been brought up, and these were that the sacrifice of anything and everything was to be made at once and gladly in the service of the King. Then I bethought myself that perhaps my uncle, keeping aloof from such affairs for so many years, had conceived unfavourable opinions of my rashness, and supposed that I had pushed forward when there was but little need, wasting strength which might afterwards have been more useful.

He sat staring into the fire, the long, slender, fingers of one hand tapping nervously on the back of the other. In form he was tall and thin, and slightly stooping, and, though still under sixty, his hair was white.

"You have reason to be afraid, nephew," said he, looking up at me quickly. "If they catch you now they will either shoot you out of hand or ship you off to the colonies."

I laughed and stood up.

"They have to catch me, first," said I.

I stripped off my riding-coat, and my uncle glanced at me curiously.

"I must make you my banker, sir," and his eye fired instantly. A small, sharp knife for making pens lay on the table and I took it and began to rip up the lining of my coat.

As I hacked at the stitches, gold coins began to pour down freely. Some rolled on the floor, and Sir Arthur Vaughan pounced on these and collected them carefully. Then he began to arrange them in stacks of ten. He laughed gleefully as he did so.

"Why, Geoffrey, this is a rare device to stow your money. It clinks in its fall like music. 'Tis a second shower of Danæ."

"When I had the word to march," said I, "Roger Thorne, the steward, hastened to drum up what store of gold there was about the place, and old Dorothy, the housekeeper, sat down at once to fasten them in small parcels in my coat. I wanted to put them in a bag, but she insisted, and indeed I have carried them more easily and surely thus."

"One hundred and seven pieces of minted gold," said Sir Arthur. "The sight does my eyes good."

"Why, uncle," I cried, "surely you and gold are not such strangers as that. I have heard that you have here half as many acres again as we have at Butley Croft."

"Acres," repeated my uncle, twisting his features into a contemptuous expression; "acres enough, and that were all. But of what worth? Three out of four of them feed you one sheep, and that a little one, per acre and the rest are nothing great to speak of."

Land so poor as that went clean beyond my experience or imagination and I could only nod my head in sympathy as my uncle continued to grumble about the poverty of Nant y Bryn.

"Never a penny do I receive in coin from the tenants," said he, reaching a black leathern book from a shelf near the fireplace, and opening it. "Here are their methods of payment and you might as well try to shake the hills themselves as to try to change their customs. Jenkin Evans," he read, "holds sixty acres of land known as Tynant. He pays yearly two cows, a three-year-old ox, and four sheep. Evan Jenkins holds seventy acres, Frongoch, he pays three tubs of butter, six pigs, and thirty sheep. Pedr Williams the weaver, he pays forty yards of homespun cloth and a roll of blanket stuff. I have to be my own chapman and turn these things to account as well as I can. It's a poor country this, a poor country."

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Gold coins began to pour down freely.

CHAPTER VI.

My Uncle's Enemies.

I looked into the fire and knew not what to say. I had scarcely expected to be called upon so suddenly to pity my uncle's circumstances. It seemed rushing on at a stride to a stage in our confidence which ought to be of a later date—if, indeed of any date—for when a man sat before a great fire in a great house, well provided with everything necessary to living, except the mere counters of money, it seemed to me that he was crying out before he was hurt.

"Uncle,' said I, as the thought flashed into my mind, "who are these men who are haunting the country, the men who seized Miss Vaughan?"

My uncle went as white as paper, and drew in his breath suddenly. His dark eyes dilated and glowed, but whether in anger or fear I could not tell.

"Y Gwylliaid Cochion," he said in a low voice, and then, as if the sound fascinated him, he repeated slowly again "Y Gwylliaid Cochion."

"That's the name I heard," said I, and I told him of the man who would not venture into the hills.

"They are a band of thieves," said my uncle, "and very ferocious, dangerous fellows, too. Gwylliaid means men who move about in the dusk; cochion is the mere adjective red. It is applied to them because they are all red-haired. They marry and intermarry in and in among the band, and I believe that a black-haired one was never whelped. If it was, they would instantly dispose of it to keep up their tradition."

"The Red Men of the Dusk," said I. "Why dusk?"

"Because," replied Sir Arthur, "they lie by closely in the day and never stir till the dusk falls. You might march through their very haunts in daylight and you would go safely. But let the sun set and find you on the hills with no shelter near at hand and you may turn your head and see one moving on you as noiseless as a shadow, and as unexpectedly as if the earth had yawned behind you and flung him forth. It is this peculiarity of theirs which makes people so frightened of them. Many of the ignorant are more than half persuaded that the Red Men of the Dusk are not mortal, but are evil spirits of the mountain."

"There is a man among them in authorty, who seemed mortal enough," said I. "I met him by chance, and he was willing enough to quarrel and fight, and a terrible fighter he was."

I began to describe the swordsman, and my uncle held up his hand before I had said a dozen words.

"Ieuan Gwyllt," said he; "that is, in English 'Wild John.'"

I went on to describe our encounter, and, at the mention of our crossing swords, my uncle looked up with extraordinary interest.

"You killed him," he cried eagerly. "Say you killed him?"

"That was more than I could do in fair fight," I rejoined. "I had a chance of doing it, certainly, but it was not a chance which a gentleman could take."

"What chance? How?" panted by uncle.

I told the story.

"And I say, nephew, that you are little better than an idiot," screamed my uncle, "with your foolish notions and raw fancies of honour and fair play and the like. There is your enemy. Kill him, I say, kill him. To think you had Ieuan Gwyllt at your feet and spared him. Oh, to think of it! I would have given half I possess to enjoy such a chance."

He sprang from his chair and paced the room excitedly. He looked at me with a scowl, and it is possible that I was looking black also, for I felt by no means pleased with the compliments my relative had showered upon me. Sir Arthur stopped suddenly and smiled. It was not a happy smile, and when he laughed, as he proceeded to do, there was no mirth in the sound.

"Geoffrey," said he, "your story excited me not a little. And I fear my excitement carried me beyond the bounds of politeness. If you only knew what reasons I have to hate Ieuan Gwyllt you would have given him no quarter, but would instantly have struck him out of my path."

"Out of your path, sir?" said I, for he had half apologised, and that was enough for me from an old man and a near relation.

"Out of my path," repeated Sir Arthur. "The story is this. Five and twenty years or more ago the father of Ieuan Gwyllt belonged to those of whom we have been speaking. The chief of that day died, and a fierce quarrel arose between two cousins for the vacant place. The one who was worsted left the band and settled, without his origin being known, on this estate. He was the father of Ieuan Gwyllt, and Ieuan, then a child, came with him. Until two years ago Ieuan was a favoured tenant, treated by me with the utmost consideration and kindness. Then he took it into his head that he had some grievance against me, and twice I was fired at as I rode home in the dusk."

"He tried to kill you—a tenant on the estate tried to kill you!" I exclaimed, for matters were on quite another footing at Butley Croft, and, for matter of that, everywhere else of which I knew in Worcestershire.

"He tried to kill me," repeated my uncle, dropping his hand with solemn and deliberate gesture on the table. "I endeavoured to restrain him, as much to save him from the consequences which his violent temper would bring upon him as to protect myself, but he fled to his tribe. There he soon rose to authority, and he has made use of it to draw them to this side of the country. Partly, also, they had made their old haunts too hot to hold them."

(To be continued.)

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£25 FOR A NEWSAGENT OR BOOKSTALL CLERK. £5 FOR EACH OF THE BOOKSTALL BOYS. £50 FOR WITNESSES.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtain this copy of *S. S.*, to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25**, and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for bookstall boys, and the £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

The addresses of the five witnesses must be written in full. If, however, they are all of the same town, it will be sufficient if the sentence, "All of Bradford, or Liverpool, or Glasgow," as the case may be, is written on the margin

It is necessary for each coupon sent in by one competitor to bear five signatures, but the same five people may sign as many coupons as they like. It is not necessary for each competitor to find a fresh set of witnesses for each coupon. Competitors may sign for one another.

There is no objection to rubber stamps being used in place of signatures.

Coupons from PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES, M. A. P., PASTIMES, SUNDAY READER, BIG BUDGET, and PICK-ME-UP are all available in this competition.

You may keep all the coupons and send them in to reach here by the closing day if you wish.

The coupons belonging to each separate competitor must be inclosed in one envelope or parcel. Two or three competitors may not send in together.

The prize will be awarded to the competitor whose two figures are correct or most nearly correct. For example, if the correct figures are 7,000 and 3,000 respectively, the competitor whose forecasts are 6,999 and 2,999 will take precedence over the competitor whose forecasts are, say, 7,000 and 2,997 respectively.

All correspondence regarding this competition must be addressed to The Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and NOT marked BIRTHS. Only envelopes containing coupons should be marked in this way.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....

2. .....

3. .....

4. .....

5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "PASTIMES," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," and "M. A. P."

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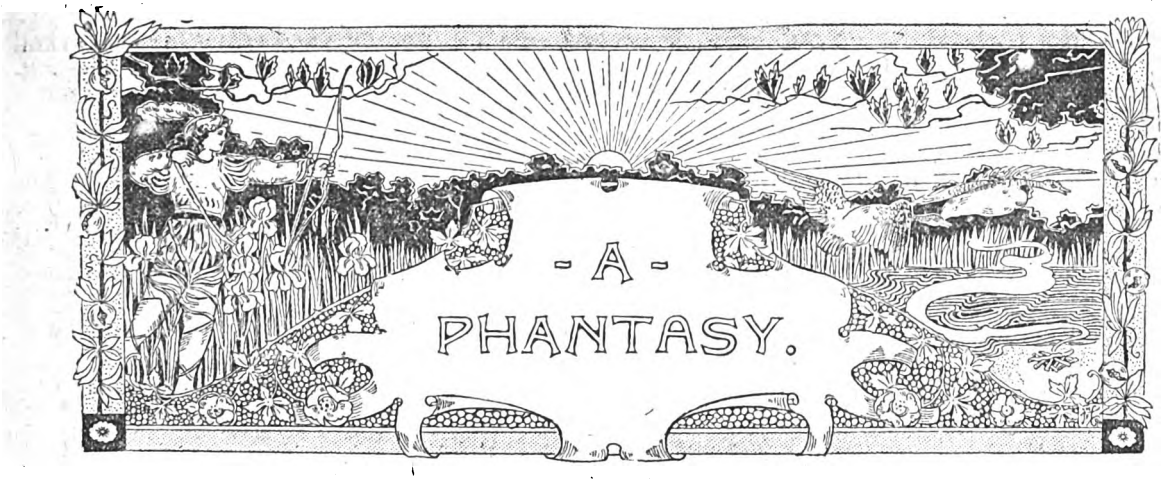

It was a chance remark, and one that is often made concerning an intelligent animal, but its effect upon my friend Sidney Darrow was singular.

His shoulders twitched nervously, and his hand went up to his throat as though something choked him.

I have a large mastiff that I call Woden. A moment before, he had left his accustomed place on a rug in one corner of the room, and had come to my side, to receive the caress which, at intervals through the day, he seems to find necessary to his happiness. As I smoothed his wrinkled forehead and patted his soft, large ears, I observed with what trustful affection his great eyes beamed upon me.

It was then that I remarked to Sidney Darrow, who sat near at hand, carelessly watching us through the smoke of his pipe:

"Does it not seem to you sometimes that Woden has a very human look?"

And my friend made no answer with the peculiar motions which I have described.

Woden left my side, and walked slowly back to his rug. Darrow watched his movements with half-closed eyes, his hand still clutched his throat. When the dog had lain down, my friend turned his gaze upon me.

"Don't say that about Woden again! It will make me hate him."

He was plainly much moved, and the seriousness of his appeal was not to be doubted.

Presently, before I was ready to make any reply, he separated the heavy beard that covered his chin and neck, disclosing a deep, zig-zag scar.

"Look here," he said, "I never showed you this."

"What made it—a burn?"

"No. Let me tell you the story."

* * * * *

"There was a period of my life, some years ago, that I spent on my uncle's ranch near San Juan Capistrano. At that time the raising of sheep was one of the chief industries of Southern California, and much of the land in our vicinity was devoted to pasturage.

"About half-a-mile from my uncle's house, in a lonely cañon, stood the hut of a shepherd—built of sun-dried clay, repulsive without, cheerless within, grim and squalid, yet in every way so well suited to its solitary inhabitant, that one might think he had constructed it about himself, as the nautilus does its shell.

"He was a tall, hard-visaged man, with a great shaggy, black beard, haggard features, and eyes that you could not look into without a shudder. Do you understand what I mean? He was one of those wild beasts of men, whose faces, seen but once, live always in your memory; and when sleep will not come, they show themselves—bodiless masks as they are—through your tightly-closed eyelids.

"The trail of the cañon passed within a few yards of the hut, and my duties—I assisted my uncle in the management of the ranch—frequently led me in that direction.

"When not away on the hillside with his flock of sheep, the shepherd usually stood or squatted motionless in front of his hovel. A few feet away from him crouched his dog. The pair, man and beast, stared at me from the moment I came in sight, until I passed among the oaks beyond, making no movement, save a slow turning of the head, and offering no response to my salutation. At last I came to pass them in silence, but never without a vague sense of dread.

"I learned from the men on my uncle's ranch that the shepherd was considered queer, or, as they expressed it, 'locoed.' They said he was in the habit of talking to his dog, as though it were a man; and that even his fellow-countrymen feared and avoided him.

"Crazy he may have been—a drunkard he certainly was. At frequent intervals he appeared in the town with a large, black demijohn, which he carried away, filled with liquor of the sort that makes maniacs.

"One afternoon, as I came down the cañon, I heard the yelping of a dog, and approaching the hut of the shepherd, beheld a sight that filled me with anger and distress.

"The fellow had hung up the dog by the hind legs against the side of the house, and was beating him with a large, knotted stick.

"I did not stop to think much of the consequences. I did as you, or any man who has ever known a dog, would have done. I jumped from the saddle, and, drawing my knife as I ran, cut the animal down. Then I turned and faced the shepherd.

"I suppose he thought I was armed—which I was not—for he did not take up the gage of battle, but stared at me fiercely out of his blood-shot eyes.

"The dog hobbled away to a short distance, shook off the rope with which its legs were entangled, and, crouching low, watched us.

"'Come,' I said in Spanish; 'why should you kill your dog? You have drunk too much *aguardiente*. To-morrow you will be glad that I saved his life.'

"He emitted a strange sound through his teeth and lips. It was very like the snarl of a wolf.

"'If you do not care for the dog, will you sell him?' I asked.

"'No,' he replied, with an oath; 'I will not sell him, I mean to kill him.'

"'Very well,' I said, 'if you wish to take the animal's life, shoot him; but you shall not beat him to death.'

"The shepherd turned towards the hut, muttering imprecations a ternately against the dog and myself. When he came to the door, he called to the dog:

"'Demonio! Come here!'

"The animal eyed him but did not move. Then the shepherd disappeared from view in the dark interior of the hovel.

"I remounted, and continued on my way down the trail. I had gone about a hundred yards, when suddenly there was a crashing in the thicket behind, and I wheeled hastily round to discover the dog. He had followed, evidently, for the purpose of making my acquaintance, and to thank me for the rescue.

"I called to him and patted the side of my saddle, meaning that he should come where I could touch him. He came nearer to obey, but, as he approached, my horse gave a violent snort, and began to shy away from him. The act surprised me not a little, for the animal was a stolid old bronco that rarely started at anything, least of all at a dog.

"The dog stopped his advance and watched us, while I struggled to bring the horse nearer to him, and to calm his very evident terror. But my efforts were unavailing, though I used whip and spur and threw all my strength on the bridle. The horse would not allow the dog to touch him. For some strange cause he even trembled in his presence. At last I gave up the undertaking and examined the shepherd's companion from a little distance.

"He was considerably larger than the average collie. I imagine that he must have had some Newfoundland, or, perhaps, St Bernard blood—the sheep-dogs of California are rarely of pure breed. His hair was short, curly, and black as night. He squatted on his haunches, and looked steadily at me during all the time that I occupied in making the survey; and when, at last, I spoke to him, he lifted his ears a little, but made no other movement.

"'Demon!' I said; 'Is that your name—Demonio?'

"At first I thought that the name had been given to him because he was dark in colour, as the popular belief paints an evil spirit. But a moment later, when my eyes rested on his, I saw—or, perhaps, I should say I felt—that there might be some further reason.

"I scarcely knew how to describe the effect that his steady gaze produced on me. It was at first merely an impression that this dog was different from any of his species that I had ever known before—then a conviction that *something was wrong*—and, lastly an uncontrollable terror.

"These sensations followed one another in quick succession—almost in a flash, and without stopping to ask myself any questions I gave my horse free rein, and we went plunging headlong down the trail.

"Once again in the open plain, I tried to deceive myself into thinking that my terror had been only apprehension lest the shepherd should come upon me from behind. The rapid descent of the twilight, and the peculiar behaviour of the horse had, I assured myself, served to heighten the effect of this dread.

"A few days later, when I passed the hut, the shepherd and his dog, in their usual attitudes, stared at me, sullen and silent. I looked closely at the dog's face, but could see nothing but keen animal intelligence.

"Several months passed.

"One morning, as I went out towards the corral, one of the men employed on the ranch came to me and said:

"'I believe that something has happened to that crazy old shepherd. His dog came last night, and would not go away.'

"'What, Demon?' I said, and, as I spoke, the animal came running up.

"I patted his head, and talked to him, but he jumped about uneasily, as though he were anxious to be gone.

"I suggested to the man that we should ride to the cañon, and, mounting, we followed the dog out into the road. He ran along several yards in advance of us, looking back, occasionally, to make sure that we were coming.

"When the cañon was reached, his pace slackened, and, some distance from the hut, he stopped, and fell in behind us.

"'He dreads a beating,' said I.

"From the trail we called to the hut, and receiving no answer, rode up to the door and looked in.

"There lay the shepherd in the middle of the floor, his arms outstretched, and his head thrown back—dead.

"An uncared-for corpse is always a disagreeable object to look upon, but something had happened to this one that rendered it impossible for me to give it more than one quick glance. I hastily turned my horse's head away, and rode over towards the spot where the dog was crouching. My companion, more resolute than I, dismounted, and went into the hut. When he came out again, he said:

"'I covered it over with one of those sheep skins, so that it shouldn't scare anyone else. His bottle was lying near him, and I guess he must have drunk himself to death. *That* was probably done by coyotes, or maybe a mountain-lion.'

"We rode to town, where we gave notice to the authorities of the man's death, and also to several of his countrymen. In talking with one of the latter, I asked him what disposition would be made of the dead man's sheep and of his dog.

"'The sheep,' answered the man, 'were not his; he had sold them. As to the dog, nobody wants the brute, I imagine.'

"'Why not?'

"The man shrugged his shoulders, and looked askance at Demon, who had followed me.

"'Very well,' I said, 'then I will take him.'

"No objection was made, and Demon passed into my possession.

"My uncle had several hundred sheep, which were tended by an old native Californian and his son. I took Demon to them, and offered his services in the care of the flock. To my surprise they refused. I urged the matter, and finally demanded the ground of their opposition. At last the old man said:

"'He looks like a sheep-killer.'

"This accounted for the refusal of the other shepherds to take the dog; they, too, suspected him. Knowing how prone such men are to superstitious prejudices, I would not allow the animal to be condemned without a cause.

"'Do you know that he kills sheep?' I asked the old man.

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"He shook his head. Then I asked if anyone had ever seen the dog prowling about at night, or behaving in a suspicious manner. Again he shook his head.

"'It is all nonsense,' I said, finding myself fairly forced into the position of the dog's defender.

"'Now, I tell you,' said the old shepherd; 'I know that dog. I think him a bad dog. I will show you something.'

"He went into his hut, and brought out two half-grown puppies—lively, wriggling little fellows—and put them down on the ground before Demon.

"'You see,' he said, 'puppies always try to play with strange dogs—never afraid of them. Look! I told you he is a bad dog.'

"The infants waddled up to Demon, who approached them wagging his tail good-humouredly. But the instant they got a good view of his face, they whirled about and went off ki-yi-ing at a great rate.

"The performance struck me as amusing, and I laughed, but the old shepherd looked very grave.

"'A bad dog,' he reiterated, slowly; 'very bad.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I will take him myself, since you will not. But if I ever learn'—here I instinctively looked down into the dog's face, as though speaking to him—'if I ever learn that he has killed a sheep, I shall have him shot.'

"The dog's eyes looked up into mine with a keen, intelligent gaze, and I could not resist the belief that he had understood me.

"It is not improbable that my prejudice against the animal was even stronger than that of the shepherd's; but, as I was an educated, reasoning man, proud of my freedom from every form of superstition, how could I bring myself to countenance such irrational fancies? On the contrary my duty seemed to lie in the opposite direction—to defy this prejudice, and to protect and defend the object at which it was levelled. Besides, I had come to feel an overpowering curiosity with regard to this creature, which, though apparently inoffensive, was so generally hated and feared. What was it that inspired all other animals with such distrust of him? For not my horse alone, but every quadruped on the place manifested a very evident unwillingness to have him about. The other dogs would not associate with him. Yet he was never quarrelsome or ill-tempered.

"One thing he did which, though not a serious fault, was often annoying. He had a habit of watching closely every motion of the person nearest him—usually myself. Sometimes I almost imagined that I could feel his eyes, when I did not see them—his gaze was so constant and intense. This habit, I thought to myself, was acquired during his life with the brutal shepherd, who might be expected at any moment to inflict some undeserved blow upon him. Despite this explanation, there were times, when we were alone together, and I looked up to find him watching me, that I felt the chill of an unreasoning dread.

"Demon had been in my possession several weeks, when all at once I began to hear complaints about the killing of sheep. Every morning a fresh victim was found—dead—now of one flock, and now of another, yet all within a limited range. They were all mutilated in the same way, and the work was plainly that of a dog, practiced in sheep-killing. As I had expected, suspicion immediately fell upon Demon; and one morning when I came out of the house, I found a couple of shepherds waiting to see me.

"They had no evidence against the dog, yet they demanded that he should be put to death. The injustice of it roused my indignation, and, calling Demon to me, I said:

"'I want you to look at him. You say that a sheep was killed last night. Where is there any sign of blood about his jaws?'

"One of them examined Demon's mouth, but found no mark of the slaughter. The other said:

"'That does not prove anything. A regular sheep-killer does not spill much blood, and sometimes he learns to wash it all off.'

"This sounded improbable to me, but I did not argue the matter.

"'Very well,' I said; 'to-night Demon shall be shut up in the corral, and if a sheep is killed, we shall know that he is not the guilty dog.'

"They shook their heads.

"'He will find some way to get out of the corral,' said one of them.

"'Then he shall sleep in my room with me,' I said; 'and the door and shutters shall be closed. Does that suit you?'

"This arrangment seemed to satisfy them, and they went away.

"That night I took Demon to my room, and gave him a mat in the corner for a bed. His only possible means of escape was by the door or by the window.

"I locked the door, and closed the window shutter, and hooked it in place. Then I went to bed, and almost immediately fell asleep.

"In the morning when I woke, Demon lay upon his mat, apparently in sound slumber.

"I began to dress.

"When I was nearly done, my uncle rapped at the door.

"'Have you Demon in there?' he called out.

"'Yes,' I answered, opening the door.

"He exhibited much surprise.

"'Another sheep was killed last night,' said he.

"'Well,' I replied, 'that merely proves what I have said—that Demon is innocent.'

"'Yes, of course,' said my uncle, looking doubtfully at the dog.

"He went over to the window, and inspected the fastening.

"'Impossible!' he said.

"'For him to open it?' I asked. 'Of course.'

"My uncle threw the shutter back, and pointed significantly at the flower-bed below. The plants had been crushed down, and the earth displaced, and round about were numerous dog-tracks.

"'That was not there yesterday,' said he.

"My room was on the ground-floor, and, from the window to the earth, was only two or three feet. Had the shutter been open, the dog might easily have climbed out and in again, but it had been fastened all night.

"I turned and looked at Demon. He was watching us stealthily, with the expression in his eyes that I knew and dreaded.

"My uncle made another examination of the fastening of the shutter.

"At last he said:

"'I am convinced that the sheep-killer is not Demon. There is no dog in existence that could manipulate that crooked hook to open the shutter. Those footprints were left there by some stray animal.'

"The conviction seemed inevitable, and I agreed with him. At the same time. I was resolved to try the experiment again, and watch the dog more carefully.

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"That night I shut Demon in as before, and closed and fastened both door and shutter. There was a full moon, which made the landscape bright as day without, and it occurred to me, just as I was about to put out my lamp, that I could throw open the upper half of the shutter and admit the light. It fell in a broad, white square directly across the mat where the dog lay, and after I got into bed, I found that I could watch him easily, without turning my head upon the pillow.

"Then I discovered that he was watching me. There was nothing unusual about that—only his eyes were strangely bright.

"I tossed about in the bed for a time, but he never moved.

"At last I determined to deceive him into the belief that I was asleep. I closed my eyes, and, presently, by a careless movement, drew the lace edge of the pillow-slip across my face. Thus I could watch him, and yet conceal the fact that my eyes were open.

"When I had lain in this position motionless, for, perhaps, ten minutes, Demon suddenly lifted his head, and turned it on one side.

"Plainly he was listening—for what, I could not imagine. He put his head down, and for another ten minutes did not move.

"Then, gradually and noiselessly, he rose to his feet, and came towards the bed.

"A little distance away he stopped and listened again Evidently he did not hear what he expected, for after standing a moment, he returned to his corner and lay down.

"Suddenly I found the explanation of his strange conduct. He had listened to my breathing, that he might determine if I slept.

"Resolved to deceive him if possible, I began slowly to lengthen my respiration, and to expel it with more sound and force.

"At the end of a few minutes, I saw that I was succeeding in my design.

"A second time he rose with perfect stillness and came to the bed His face wore an expression of fiendish cunning, so utterly foreign to his customary mien, that under other circumstances, I should have failed to recognise him.

"A swift flash of satisfaction in his eyes showed that he thought me asleep, and he turned to the window to make his escape.

"His motions were slow and cautious, reminding me of a cat, rather than a dog. I had expected him to make some slight noise in unhooking the shutter, for I doubt if I myself, with my life in hazard, could have accomplished it inaudibly. But there was no sound to be heard in the room, except that of my own slow, steady respiration.

"I think it must have taken him five minutes to draw the hook. Then the shutter was swung back quietly inch by inch, and his way was clear.

"He stood for a moment with his forepaws upon the window-sill, and looked back at me. As he did so, I felt again the same strange impression of terror that had overwhelmed me the first time my eyes had met his in that lonely cañon. For an instant I held my breath and had he continued to look, he must have discovered that I was not asleep. But now, with a sudden, yet noiseless leap, he went out of the window—gone on his murderous quest.

"It was several minutes before I ventured to move.

"At last I rose and went to the window. Far away where the bright moonlight fell upon the side of the hill I could see a small patch of darkness scudding swiftly along. It was Demon on his way to the sheep pastures.

"I scarcely know what impulse actuated me, but I went to the closet in my room, took down a large navy revolver, and, when I got back into bed, slipped it underneath my pillow. I did not then, and will not now confess to any real fear of the dog—that is to say, physical fear. There was a dread—a vague, indistinct horror—at something unexplainable that I seemed to see in his eyes. But had I really feared him I should have closed the shutter, rendering his return impossible.

"I lay still and watched for an hour. The nearest flocks, I knew, could be reached in a few minutes, and his return might be expected any time. I drew the lace over my eyes again, and listened for a sound that should indicate his approach.

"Suddenly a great, black head appeared at the window—without the warning of a footfall—materialised, as it seemed out of the darkness of the night. In it two round, red lights gleamed like coals of fire. The moon shone clear and full on his face, and I could plainly see the blood and foam with which his jaws were covered.

"He climbed slowly into the room. Then, with an ingenuity that was even more than human, he closed the shutter noiselessly, and fastened it in place.

"He gave one quick glance at me, and went over to his corner. Through the net-work of the lace I watched him, while he licked the blood-stains from his feet, and washed his face and neck, with the motions and attitude of a cat.

"I grew faint with the horror of it all, and, at last forgot the part which I was playing, and ceased to counterfeit the respiration of one who sleeps. Even when Demon suddenly started up, looked at me, and listened, I did not notice my mistake.

"Then he came nearer to the bed—a few feet away—and glared at me out of those terrible eyes.

"That was the moment in which I saw the thing and understood it all. You will not believe it—I don't ask that you should—but I saw through that creature's eyes down into the lost human soul that occupied its body.

"It was the soul of a murderer—the destroyer of the drunken shepherd in his lonely hovel, the slayer of the sheep—now, at last, throwing off all disguise.

"With a strange, half-animal and half-human cry, the thing sprang at my throat. I threw up my hand and it missed its aim, the teeth closing only on the skin. The next instant I fired the revolver, and it rolled over, dead.

"The wound was not serious, but it left that ugly-looking scar. There is another scar that the experience left, which is probably much larger—if one could see it. I mean on my memory." C. D. Wood.

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

II.—JOHNNY.

It was just before the last and by far the worst outbreak of the Apaches in the Black Range that the parson and me felt called upon to rid the camp of the gamblers, outcasts, and other social pests which we concluded had had their day.

It raised a howl at first, but we had the inside track. Gibbs being our justice, and Shady, who had just been let out of prison, reformed and joined our mission, had promised to assist the prosecution, as he said, "to the eternal perdition of the wicked."

Of course, our church was a good deal bigger and stronger now than when we were trying to build it, and it annoyed us when the gamblers threw the fact in our teeth that they had contributed towards its erection when we started, and had never refused a subscription when called upon, which, we had to admit, was pretty often.

But the parson and me and the rest of the mission determined that the camp needed purifying, and the first thing on the programme was the banishment of the gamblers and the balance of our non-producing population, both male and female.

As I said, there was a storm when our edict went forth, but none howled so loud as a little gambler whom they called "Johnny," and who acted as a cashier of Bledsoe's bank in the Long Branch saloon.

I never heard his other name; I don't think he had one; it was just "Johnny," and if anyone spoke of Johnny's committing any unlawful act, the whole camp knew what "Johnny" it was. He was an ordinary-looking little rascal, pale and white-like. The parson said it was morphine—perhaps it was—but when he wasn't drinking he was quiet enough; and, honestly, I never heard of his doing anything really wicked.

That is, nothing except the time he "cold-decked" me in a poker game in the Fireside saloon, and robbed me of the money intended for my wife and children, though he said afterwards he'd never done it if I hadn't tried to hold out a faked flush on him at cards, and to this day I don't know how he found that out.

But Johnny swore more than anyone when we ordered him and his kind out of camp, and declared in language which I would blush to repeat that he wouldn't go, but would stay until an unmentionable hereafter was converted into an ice field.

We were all ready to put the machinery in motion, and our warrants were sworn out under the vagrant law against all pests in general and Johnny in particular—there was a dozen against him—when the report came which upset a continuance of all legal proceedings.

The Apaches had broken away from their reservation and were sweeping the range, killing men, women, and children. Our camp organised, and all men available—gamblers and the rest—were armed and sent out in squads to gather in the prospecters and ranchers.

We had in our little mining camp about one hundred women and children and about twenty men after the others had left us. Everything had been quiet for three or four days, and we had begun to laugh at our fears, when one afternoon a man came rushing into camp with the news that a band of thirty or forty Apaches were but a few miles from us, and coming our way.

Never did I see such a day before or since in my life! We rounded up all the women and children, some of 'em crying, some of 'em shrieking, and some of 'em fainting, and got them safe enough in the only stone building in the town, and, with plenty of water and provisions, prepared for a siege.

We didn't wait long, for in an hour or so, from the lime ridge just opposite the town and across the creek came one shot and then another and another, until we thought the whole Apache tribe was after us. Our men fired back a few times, but it wasn't any use, because the Indians lay close behind the ledge, and they weren't takin' any chances.

So we just waited, and the parson proposed that we should hold services, and, though nobody voted for it, him and me began. I never heard the parson talk so well as he did with those red devils tryin' to shoot in the window of the room where we were, but the parson and me were in the back part of the store, and knew they couldn't hit us.

But none of the congregation seemed to be in the right spirit for the kind of comfort he was giving them, for the women cried all the louder, and the children

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clung to their mothers, and their mothers kept kissin' them all the time, so that the parson and me couldn't start the hymn.

Suddenly one of the men, peeping out of the window, cried: "Look there!"

Some of us crawled to the window and looked out. Right across the creek on a flat that ran to the lime-ledge was a little house, and as we looked we saw a woman waving a handkerchief towards us as if begging us to come to her.

We counted faces, and soon found who it was; it was Jerry Williams' wife, with her three children, right under the shadow of that ledge; not a man with 'em, and at the awful mercy of those savages as soon as they discovered that the little home was not deserted.

What was to be done? If half-a-dozen men could get within the walls they could easily stand off a hundred Indians; but to get there one had to go down to the creek bottom, up the side under the rocks, and then make a clear run of two or three hundred feet under the very guns of old Nana and his villians, and that meant sure death.

We didn't say nuthin' at first; we were all chilled. Even the women and children left off cryin', thinking of the fate of this lone woman and her babies. We turned to the parson for consolation.

"Don't waste time in talk. Let's *do* something!"

We looked round to see who had spoken. It was Johnny.

He was standing near the wall, holding a little child; he was whiter and paler than ever, and trembling worse than I was. We had allowed him to take refuge with us until the excitement should die out, and then we intended to force the law on him.

Before anyone said a word he put down the child and walked to where we were.

"Fellars," he said, and you could hear a pin drop. "Fellars, there's a woman and three young 'uns right in the jaws of them wolves. If they killed 'em straight out it wouldn't be so bad, but you know what it means if they take women and children."

When he said that some of the women sobbed again and hugged their babies closer to their bosoms.

"Boys," he went on, his voice choking a little, "that poor woman is alone with her kids; her husband has gone off to help save others, and left them in our charge. Are y'u goin' to leave 'em there alone?"

No one spoke. None of us wanted to get the golden harp the parson was preachin' about just yet; we thought we could wait a little while for it.

"*I* am *not*," he cried, trembling with excitement "and you fellars needn't run any risk. What six of you have the nerve to make the break? I'll deal; you play the game. We can get out from here and down to the creek without their seein' us. When we get to the creek bottom I'll go up the stream until I'm at the end of the ledge; you fellars go down the stream till, you get opposite the house, then watch me, and crawl up the bank cautious. Just before y'u get to the top wait and be ready, then I'll jump on the ledge, and, with a war-whoop, make them think a whole army is comin'; they'll turn loose on me. Then's your time; while I'm engagin' their attention you strike for the house. It's easy—see?"

"But you——"

It was one of the women, the mother of the child he had been holding. She hesitated in calling him by his nick-name; there was something about him that awed her.

"Me?" he replied with a laugh. "Oh, it's my game; I'm playin' it."

He patted the head of the child for an instant, and then, drawing his pistol from the belt, walked towards the door.

His spirit had infused the others; six men followed in silence.

We all clustered as near round the window as we dared to watch them, the parson and me remaining behind to administer consolation.

We saw them crawl to the creek bottom, crouch together talking, and then separate, Johnny going up the stream, the other six going down.

With our hearts in our mouths we watched them creeping along.

At last the six brave fellows are opposite the little house with its four precious lives, and only the open flat between them. Johnny was opposite the ledge. We saw them all crawl closer to the top, the Indians ignorant of their presence. We saw Johnny motioning his companions to get a little nearer the edge, then be ready, and then with pistol in each hand he leaped upon the ledge, shrieking, shouting, shooting, and waving his arms as if giving orders and leading a regiment in a charge against the foe.

For an instant there was a hush, except the wild yelling of Johnny. The Indians were taken by surprise; they believed a small army was coming up that bank behind this captain. Only for an instand though, and then every one of the murderous band turned his rifle on Johnny, and a volley followed.

He tottered a minute, poor Johnny! and looked towards the little house as if saying good-bye, and then he fell in a heap over the bank.

But it worked. The other six men, when the Indians fired, made a rush, and in less than half a minute were safe within the walls, ready to keep off every Apache in the tribe.

We sat still, all of us, even the parson. Suddenly we heard the blast of the trumpet. It was the troops coming from Hillsboro'; and when they rode up, and we saw them Apaches flyin' for their ponies, and the soldiers after them, I wept, I was so comforted.

We went over to Mrs. Williams' house first, and she was holding a baby and trying to hug the rest of her children, and asking God to be merciful to the man who had saved her and the little ones, for they had told her the story.

Then we went were Johnny was. He was shot all to pieces, but was still living. He opened his eyes when Mrs. Williams took his head in her arms, and tried to smile when she kissed him. But he was goin' awful fast, and it appeared to the parson a good time and place to say somethin', and preach a moral, so he bent over him and said:

"My poor sinner, do you realise that you will soon be with God; and after your wicked life can you meet him?"

The old smile for an instant seemed to play over the thin lips. He raised his fading eyes to the woman who was holding him and to the sobbing children who were clinging to her, and then, in a whisper so low we could hardly hear him, he gasped:

"Can't tell—parson. If He asks who—I—am—I'll say—'Johnny.' This mother—an' the kids—'ll tell—the—rest."

And when we looked again Johnny was already pleading his cause to the Great Father of us all, and somehow or other I've often wished that the parson and me could plead ours so well.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietors, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

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The special combined appliance for men consists of an Electropathic Belt, with suspender attached. By its aid the debilitated are speedily restored to health. As a safe and certain cure for varicocele, nervous exhaustion, and the many distressing symptoms of impaired vitality, this invention has no equal. All men are invited to call, if possible, or write to the MEDICAL BATTERY CO., LTD.,

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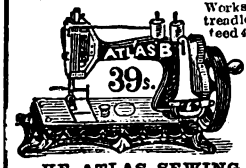

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NEURALGIA

Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

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Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 HATTON GARDEN, E.C.

PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass. Riveted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 23 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

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Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers, 16 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

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The Lustre Lasts!

Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

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Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

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ARE THE VERY BEST AND MOST UP-TO-DATE.

Carriage Paid. Cash Discount.

Write for New Season's List.

JUNO Cycles and Accessories sent Post Free.

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Juno No. 4, £10 10s. 17s. 6d. monthly.

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Typewriters, £9 9s. 15s. 6d. Monthly.

A SUM
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Palatable Substitute for Cod Liver Oil.

Devonshire Cream

(REALLY GENUINE.)
In Patent Air-tight Tins.
Quarter Pound 10d.
Half Pound... 1s. 4d.
One Pound ... 2s. 4d.
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MRS. CONYERS,
Morchard Bishop, Devon.

COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

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MASON'S WINE ESSENCES AND MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3 three assorted 1/8.

Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

NOTES OF INTEREST.

V. N.—In some of the wine districts of France frost bells are tolled when there is likely to be a severe frost, and immediately on hearing the warning the inhabitants hurry out of their houses and place quantities of tar between the rows of vines. Then a signal is given to light the tar, and in a few minutes a dense cloud of smoke arises, and thus the vines are said to be completely protected from the severity of the weather.

D. A.—It is stated by an authority on things canine that every spotted dog has the end of his tail tipped with white.

W.—Probably the most extraordinary story of a wound received in battle is that told of a man named Donald, of the 92nd Regiment. It was during the Waterloo campaign. He had been shot in the thigh by a musket ball. The ball was extracted, but still the wound did not heal. A large abscess formed. Poultices were applied, and on an incision being made, lo and behold! a five-franc piece and a one-franc piece were extracted, together with a bit of cloth, the larger coin having been hit nearly in the centre and forced into the shape of a cup.

Celibate.—Don't go to Friesland. The North Frisians are very unmerciful to people who don't marry. One of their legends says that after death old maids are doomed to cut stars out of the sun when it has sunk below the horizon, and the ghosts of the old bachelors must blow them up in the east, running, like lamplighters, all night up and down a ladder.

J. M.—Oh! yes. Some fine English chrysanthemums, which carried off honours, were frozen specially to send to a coming show at Wellington, New Zealand—taking a hint from the Australasian growers themselves. Each bloom was completely congealed in its zinc stand, the process taking four days.

Actor.—The average life of a theatre is shorter than you suppose. It is twenty-three years. From 1861 to 1867 inclusive, 187 theatres were burnt down, and thirteen every year since has been about the average.

Sui.—How would the following method suit you? Among the Kindeh people, who live on Lake Nyassa, in Africa, the favourite form of suicide is to enter the water and allow oneself to be swallowed by a crocodile. Take more exercise and you will soon get over your fit of pessimism. It's the liver, Sui.

Luna.—Certainly. If you were on the moon the earth would appear to be sixty-four times larger than the sun does to residents of this planet.

N. T.—Most of the inhabitants of Haugesund, Norway, have never tasted intoxicants. It has a population of 6,200, and for twenty nine years not a drop of spirituous liquor has been sold there.

Vel.—In the way of novel prosecutions that which took place at Adelaide some little time ago must be accorded a top place on the list. A bootmaker was fined a guinea and costs for encouraging a constable in idleness. The bootmaker was found in his shop playing draughts with the constable, who ought to have been on active duty at the time. The offence is not a novel one, but the wording of the charge is certainly quaint.

Flo.—A flower cut in the morning will outlast two flowers cut later in the day when the sun is upon them.

J. M. D.—It is singular, but true that the most conspicuous and indelible record which man is making in the strata now forming on the sea floor is written in the bits of coal and ash which are cast from our steamships as they pursue their way over the ocean. The quantity of this *débris* is very great, and, unlike the wrecks, it is very evenly scattered along the paths followed by our great steamships. It is likely that already, in the tracks of our transatlantic commerce, not a square rod would fail to give a trace of this waste from our coal-burning engines. As this material is not attacked by the marine animals, and is very little affected by the other agents of decay, it will doubtless be very perfectly preserved in the strata which are to bear the records of our time.

P. Q.—I have heard of no such law in connection with needles, but when pins were first sold there was such a demand for them that a code was passed permitting their sale only on two days in the year.

C. L.—That is so. According to the insanity returns, sixteen cases in a thousand are caused by love affairs. But according to certain worthy bachelors and spinsters, every person in love is mad; they are completely cured by their marriage.

Lys.—It is generally supposed that the lily is the national flower of France. But this is not the case, for, although the *fleur-de-lys* is often taken for the emblematic flower of France as the rose is of England, it is in reality only the emblem of the old French royalty, and its import is no more a national one than the bees and violets of Napoleon. As a matter of fact, France has no national flower, and if it did possess one it is much more likely to be the daisy than the lily, for this simple flower is a universal favourite with the French. The only heraldic emblem of the country is the Gallic cock.

A. L.—It would work out like this: If the Atlantic were lowered 6,564 feet, the distance from shore to shore would be only half as great, or 1,500 miles. If lowered a little more than three miles—say 19,680 feet—there would be a road of dry land from Newfoundland to Ireland. This is the ridge on which the great Atlantic cables are laid. The Mediterranean is comparatively shallow. A drying-up of 666 feet would leave three different seas, and Africa would be joined with Italy. The British Channel is more like a pond, which accounts for its choppy waves.

Jock.—Horses succumb to cold quicker than any other animal.

A peculiar case of family complications, which will require a lot of beating, comes to me from a Glamorganshire correspondent. A married woman, the fourth wife of her husband, was stated to have been previously the widow of a thrice married man, who has issue from each marriage. The result is that in one house the children are of seven different parentages.

P. L.—The most wonderful vegetable in the world is the truffle. It has neither roots, stem, leaves, flowers, nor seeds.

S. G.—"While there's life there's soap," as the small boy put it, and because you have not yet found any to your liking it does not follow that you never will. You should try the "Chancellor" soaps; they ought to please you, and you would stand a chance of the house that is being offered as a prize in a competition.

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ALMOST INCREDIBLE—YET TRUE.

Is it incredible that an illness of fourteen years should be cured in two months? Some may say it is impossible. But *why* is it impossible? A fire that has been blazing and smouldering alternately for fifty years may be completely extinguished in an hour. The most thorough and permanent reforms that ever took place in human affairs have been *comparatively sharp and sudden.* I tell you that when the right forces get to work at certain kinds of evil, the element of time hardly enters into the calculation. In some parts of America, for instance, the tremendous change from winter to summer practically occurs in two or three weeks. Every statement in the annexed letter has been carefully verified, yet in the middle ages the result would have been attributed to no power less than a power able to work miracles:

"In the summer of 1875," says the writer, "after my confinement, I took a cold chill and failed to get up my strength. Cold, clammy chills broke over me, and I felt too exhausted to stir hand or foot. I had a bad taste in the mouth, and my tongue was coated with slimy matter. I had no appetite, and after every bit of food I ate I had pain at the chest and a sinking feeling at the pit of the stomach. My breathing was short and laboured, and I had to be propped up with pillows.

"My knees and feet were swollen, being puffed up like a bladder; and after a time they broke out. *For months I lay in bed unable to do anything;* and at other times I could barely walk about the house. I slept badly at night, and got little rest night or day.

"*For fourteen long years I continued in this low, miserable state:* sometimes feeling better, and then bad as ever; but all the time in pain. I saw doctor after doctor, and took medicines of all kinds, but nothing did me any good.

"Often I was so bad I thought I should die, and was *attended by the doctors and clergy.* All my friends and neighbours believed I would never get better.

"In August, 1889, a book was sent to me by post, in which I read about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and the good it had done many persons. The book described my own ailment, and I then resolved to give the remedy a trial. I sent to Messrs. Gratton and Co., the Chemists, at Belfast, for a supply; and, after taking it a short time, I felt it was doing me good. First I could eat well, and the food agreed with me; and my breathing was easier.

"On this, I persevered with the medicine, and gradually but surely I grew stronger; and in *two months* was in good health, all the pain and depression having left me. I have since been well, keeping Mother Seigel's Syrup in the house as a family medicine; and it always maintains us in health. This remedy has saved my life. You are at liberty to publish my statement, and refer any inquiries to me." (Signed) Jane Usher, Aghadalgon, Glenlavy, near Lisburn, Ireland, August 17th, 1897.

This most remarkable case of cure is well known throughout the district in which it took place. The lady is the wife of Mr. Robert Usher, grocer and publican, and both are highly respected in the Aghadalgon district. Mrs. Usher states that since her wonderful restoration to health, the medicine which did the work is to be found in every house in the district, and in *every instance* it has benefited the persons with whom she has spoken. Both she and her husband tell their friends and customers of what it did for them.

Here we have a case of chronic dyspepsia, with profound complications, of fourteen years' standing, cured in *two months.* It seems amazing—it *is* amazing—yet it is every word true. Other medicines failed, for the simple reason that they were not the right ones for the disease. Mother Seigel's Syrup triumphed, as it were in a moment, because it *was* the right medicine. It had power over the disease, as water has over fire, or as sunlight and heat have over the darkness and damps of night. Beyond this point all is mystery. But what of that? Life itself is a mystery; and so are all things that concern and promote it. The practical fact is, that Mother Seigel's Syrup crushes out disease when other treatment is vain, and snatches from death thousands who, without it, would soon close their weary eyes in the sleep that knows no waking. That is why (like Mrs. Usher) they spread its fame wherever illness and pain cry out for succour.

"Ivy" Soap
IT FLOATS!

PRICE 3D. PER LARGE DOUBLE TABLET

ITS REMARKABLE PROPERTY OF FLOATING ON WATER PREVENTS THE ANNOYANCE OF LOSING THE SOAP, AS IT IS ALWAYS IN SIGHT – READY WHEN WANTED.

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371, Ordsall Lane, Manchester.

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MATCHLESS

WARNING TO LADIES.

Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids when brought in contact with the metal. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.

METAL

"SIMPLE TEST."

Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with that poisonous compound known as verdigris.

MATCHLESS METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is, therefore, free from acid and all injurious ingredients.

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LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD.

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EVERYTHING

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Notice.—"DOLLY" Blue is neatly tied in a white bag to a small handle to hold by whilst using. It is the cheapest and best Laundry Blue in the market. "Dolly" Blue is sold by all Grocers and Oilmen at **1d.** per bag.

IMPORTANT.—The public are cautioned against attempts which may be made to supply other Blue, Tints, and Dyes than those of Messrs. W. Edge and Sons Ltd., when "Dolly" Blue, "Dolly" Tints, and "Dolly" Dyes are ordered.

The Dolly Specialities are manufactured by

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 537. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 15TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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You can show your common sense much better than that. A Ha'porth of Tar is soon bought, and great and beneficial results accrue if it is used on a leaky ship. To let the ship sink for so small an outlay, is to be as wise as Simple Simon, and reap a great and irreparable loss. But in other departments besides ships and tarring, men and women do strange things. Fancy a man letting his health go to ruin for the sake of a few pence, and yet people who suffer from Indigestion, Wind on the Stomach, Biliousness, Liver Complaints, Costiveness, Sick Headache, Nervous Debility, Palpitation of the Heart, etc., often let the golden opportunity slip, and refuse to buy Page Woodcock's Wind Pills. Well, if they do, the loss is their's not ours, for thousands will, and do buy them, for we now make Seven Millions of Pills (not Boxes) per year.

An Ex-Mayor of the City of Lincoln said to a friend: "I had a nasty Bilious attack last night. At such times I always take Page Woodcock's Wind Pills, and am soon right again." P.S.—Send us a post-card for the Ex-Mayor's name.

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, and Mild and Tonic in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

All sufferers from Indigestion, Liver Complaints, Wind on the Stomach, Sick Headache, Costiveness, Nervous Debility, Palpitation of the Heart, Biliousness, etc, should avail themselves of this most excellent Medicine.

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills are sold by all Medicine Vendors at 1/1½ and 2/9; post free for price by Page Woodcock, Lincoln.

106 BUY DIRECT FROM Allen Foster & Co SOLE MAKERS OF THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES BY PARCEL POST. 106

A Bargain in Costume Skirts. Made in a good Black and Navy Serge lined throughout, price only 3/11, carriage 5d. extra.

Design No. 97. 10/6

Design No. 97. 10/6. Patterns & Sketches post free. Design No. 97.—Half a Guinea.—Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable Chesterfield Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced Venetian Cloth or in the famous Speciality Serge for Half a Guinea Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at 5/6; carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric, Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple. When ordering, please give measurement round bust (under arm), length of sleeve inside, size of waist, and length of Skirt in front.

Design No. 94. 10/6 Carriage Paid 6d. extra.

Design No. 94. HALF A GUINEA.

Design No. 94 is a truly marvellous creation as a Costume. It stands unrivalled in point of value, style, and appearance—acknowledged everywhere the best Half-Guinea Costume of the Season. It is produced in the excellent Venetian Cloth or in the Speciality Serge—two grand cloths, unsurpassed for wear and durability. It is a velvet trimmed Costume with bodice and sleeves lined. It has a pretty pleated front and fits tight to the figure. The skirt is cut full and well-made. Truly marvellous value, and only Half a Guinea. Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra; or Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage 5d. extra.

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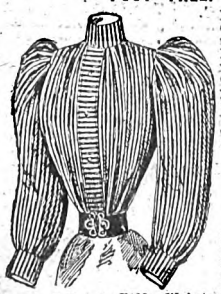

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A Great Bargain in Ladies' Fancy Striped Silk Shirts, the best line on the market, Price only 6/11 (usual retail price 8/11), carefully packed in cardboard box, and sent, carriage paid, 4d. extra. Colours: Pink, Cerise, Sky, Mauve, Light Heliotrope, Blue, Light Green, Dark Heliotrope. Also a very good line in Silk Shirts, same colours, at 5/6. Carriage 4d. extra. Send for one. Money refunded if not approved.

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The London Manufacturers,

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COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

MASON'S ESSENCE OF COFFEE AND CHICORY

EXPELS THE OLD METHOD

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES

AND

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3 three assorted 1/8.

Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 537.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 15th, 1899.

A Romance of a Miniature.

WHEN Eleanor Worth was only six years old she had spent a memorable day with her grandmother. They had driven to a quaint old-fashioned house in some forgotten corner of the county, and there they had lingered for many hours with a dear little old lady.

Eleanor remembered ever afterwards the strange, indescribable fragrance that pervaded the house; the rich but worn draperies at the long, narrow windows; the quaint mahogany furniture, with the clawfeet clutching so tenaciously at the brass balls that the little girl would have enjoyed rolling them over the floor could she only have taken them away.

They had all gone upstairs together to a great square bedroom, where a fourpost, draped bedstead filled the heart of the little girl with awe. The sweet strange fragrance of the room below followed them here also, and Eleanor's fascinated eyes had wandered about eagerly again.

At last, as she stood by the dressing-table, they fell upon the miniature lying upon it.

It was the portrait of a young man with eager, dark eyes that looked straight up at the inquisitive little girl bending over them. He had dark hair, too—wavy, careless hair—and heavy eyebrows quite as dark. His complexion was ruddy, the nose and mouth delicately moulded, and a suggestion of a smile played about his lips.

Eleanor did not take in all the details, perhaps, but the face stamped itself indelibly upon her childish memory. The young man wore the high stock and quaint coat of his day; and the miniature, which was beautifully

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executed, was secured in a gold setting with a loop at the top through which passed a small gold chain.

Eleanor carefully turned it over. In the back of the setting, beneath an oval of glass, were two locks of hair, dark and fair; and beneath these were engraved the initials: "R. A."

The little girl was still gazing at the pictured face when her grandmother called her away, and they went down the dim staircase again, and bade good-bye to the little, quaint old lady and left the house.

"I expect you're sleepy," Grandma had said, but Eleanor only shook her head.

It had been like a visit to a story-book land to her. All night she dreamed of the face in the little gold case—only it had become a little boy's face then, and they—the little boy and Eleanor—were sitting on the floor in the fragrant parlour rolling the gold balls.

As Eleanor grew older and began to read fairy tales the wonderful prince of the several stories always had flashing dark eyes and a merry mouth, and invariably wore a black stock; and when she had grown older still and indulged in an occasional love story, her favourite hero—no matter after what pattern he had originally been drawn—always appeared to her with the face of her childhood's dream.

She was hardly conscious of this herself. She had never visited the strange little old lady again; she did not remember her name, and seldom thought of that day; but once in a while it would all come back like a vision at the sight of a mahogany table, and ancient candlestick, or at the musty odour of an old book.

When Eleanor was twenty, her father offered to refurnish her room as a birthday gift, and the girl chose to go down to the auction rooms and old stores, and gather together strange bits of mahogany and *bric-à-brac* instead of the new things which her less esthetic father would himself have selected for her.

One bright morning early in spring Miss Worth set out to do some necessary shopping, and perchance, to look out for fresh curios for her room. Her mind was chiefly absorbed in planning a new dress, but as she started across the common a new impulse seized her, and she found herself irresistibly drawn in another direction. A few minutes later she was entering the low door of a small curio shop, and the proprietor looked up eagerly at her as she went towards him.

"Ah! Miss Worth. I was just hoping you would step in this morning. I have something that I am sure will interest you."

He pushed towards her a cardboard box in which, upon a piece of cotton, lay a miniature.

Miss Worth returned the old man's salutation smilingly, and took up the new treasure with interest, but as she glanced at it a wondering exclamation broke from her lips, and the colour left her face.

"Where did you get this?" she asked quickly, and sitting down suddenly in a chair.

Looking up at her from the little miniature case in her hand was the face of the hero of her childhood. She could not mistake it.

"Where did you get this?" she repeated, and the old man looked troubled.

"Have you seen it before, Miss Worth? I hope nothing is wrong. An elderly lady brought it here last night, and was very anxious to sell it. She said it was hers, and I felt no doubt——"

"What was she like?" interrupted Eleanor, eagerly.

"Why, she was rather elderly," faltered the old man, whose powers of description were rather limited.

"Did she have very soft white hair and a little face with pale-blue eyes? And did she wear black silk with old lace, and——?"

"Well, well, I think so, I think so," assented the old man. "I didn't pay much heed."

"Did she leave her name and address?" went on Miss Worth quite anxiously.

"No," replied the shopkeeper, "she only said she must sell the miniature, and asked what I could give her for it. She told me the artist's name and I recognised it as genuine."

"And you don't know where she lives? Oh, if grandmother were only living, she would know! How could she part with this? It is the same miniature—the same one."

She turned it over in her hand as she spoke. Yes, there in the back of the setting, under the oval glass surrounded by the little gold beading were the two locks of hair, and beneath, engraved in the gold, the initials "R. A."

"At how much do you value this?" asked Miss Worth at length, gazing with deepening colour into the dark eyes of the pictured face.

The old man named the price.

"I can't get it to-day," sighed the girl, laying it back in the little box, "but I must have it. Would you keep it for me till to-morrow?"

Eleanor Worth hurried home, the new dress forgotten in this strange discovery. Again she lived over that dim day of her childhood; again the old dreams returned, and she was in feverish haste to question her mother and to find some means of making the miniature her very own.

"It is my birthday to-morrow," she said, "and if only Uncle John's cheque comes as usual I shall be all right."

Uncle John's cheque was awaiting her, a most happy surprise; but when Eleanor questioned her mother as to the little old lady she was much disappointed, her mother knew nothing.

The next day the miniature was in her possession. Passing through the gold ring a long, slender chain that had been her grandmother's, and fastening this about her neck, she tucked the treasure in her belt, as it had doubtless been worn in the dim past by some happy woman with fair hair like the little lock under the glass.

Eleanor fell to dreamily imagining that she was that woman, and intensely enjoyed the bit of make-believe in half ashamed secrecy.

That evening a young man came to call on Miss Worth—a young man of most excellent family, a promising young barrister—"everything that could be desired," whispered Mrs. Worth to herself, as she greeted him with much cordiality.

His attentions to Eleanor had been greatly approved by everyone but Eleanor herself. "She is so indifferent to men," sighed her mother.

That evening Miss Worth seemed more than ever absent-minded, and her annoyed mother, to cover an awkward pause in the conversation, unwittingly gave the young man's hopes their death-blow.

"Have you shown Mr. Thorpe your miniature, Eleanor?" she asked. "My daughter has a foolish craze for antiques," she added indulgently, as the girl reluctantly drew out her treasure for inspection.

She glanced at it as she did so. Never had the eager, handsome face appealed to her more strongly; and she looked up from it to meet Mr. Thorpe's cold blue eyes, politely interested in the miniature for her sake. Never

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had his really handsome face appeared less attractive to her.

When he had looked at it, Eleanor quickly possessed herself of the miniature again and tucked it out of sight.

* * * * *

"Eleanor Worth, I really believe you are in love with that thing!"

It was a bright, vivacious little lady who spoke, and she was curled up in a corner of Eleanor's window-seat.

Eleanor was seated at her desk—a strange, beautiful old mahogany desk—her head resting on one hand, and she was gazing abstractedly at the miniature, which hung on a small brass hook before her.

She smiled in an amused way, at her friend's chatter.

"Yes," she admitted, "I have been in love with it ever since I was six years old."

"Well, I think it's a pity," responded the other. "He's handsome, to be sure, but you have gazed on his beauty so long that you don't appreciate any other type. Gordon Thorpe is just as good-looking, but you can't see it."

"Nonsense, Molly, I'm not a goose," said Eleanor flushing. "You don't suppose——"

"Yes I do," retorted Molly. "If it wasn't for that miniature I honestly believe you would have opened your eyes before now to Gordon's merits, and appreciated your good fortune."

Eleanor laughed, but it was an annoyed laugh, nevertheless.

"Come, tell me about the costume ball; have you decided yet what to wear," she asked hastily.

Her friend looked at her sharply; Eleanor had her oddities, they all knew that; she was such a dreamer, and had so many notions, but then, she was "a dear" for all that, and—what use to puzzle over her oddness?

"The ball? Oh, yes!" Molly was all animation in a minute. "I'm going as Mary, Queen of Scots, for I can get up the sweetest costume you ever saw. What will you wear, Eleanor?"

"A dress of my great-grandmother that has been a family treasure for years. It is a blue brocade."

"How lovely, and you can wear that miniature, too. It will be just the thing."

"Yes; perhaps I shall," said Eleanor carelessly. "I couldn't get up any fancy dress—it isn't in my line—and I've always wanted a chance to wear the brocade. I tried it on to-day and it fits beautifully. I'll show it to you—if you want to see it."

Of course Molly wanted to see it, and the two girls were soon eagerly discussing and planning.

The night before the great costume ball Eleanor was visited by the old dream. Again she was in the dim fragrant parlour with the young man of the miniature, but they were not children rolling balls now. Instead, she wore her grandmother's blue brocade, and he was arrayed in the picturesque dress of his day, and was pouring all the golden balls into her lap. She looked up into his eyes, but as he began to speak she awoke to the sense of the fading fragrance, and a disappointment that she had not heard what he was going to say.

The dream lingered with her all the next day, and when she was arrayed for the ball that evening she went over to her desk and looked into the eyes of the miniature.

"Shall I take you?" she said, "or shall I leave you here? If I let you go with me will you tell me what you were going to say last night when I woke up? Will you bring me the golden balls as you did last night?"

"Why, who were you talking to, Eleanor?" asked her mother, coming in, her arms full of wraps for the evening.

"Oh, just to—myself," replied the girl hastily, slipping the gold chain over her head and holding the miniature in the bosom of her old-fashioned gown.

Upon reaching the hall, Mrs. Worth was soon comfortably installed among the other chaperones, and her daughter, not loth to gaze on the beauties about her, accepted Mr. Thorpe's invitation to join the gay groups who were wandering happily up and down.

"Oh, isn't this delightful!" exclaimed Eleanor, her cheeks glowing.

She felt very much at home in the blue brocade, and she was sure that a high tortoiseshell comb and slightly powdered hair were becoming. Then it was all so like a bit of an old fairy tale; the strange and beautiful costumes, the bold knights and fair ladies—it was like a dream.

"What a relief it is to see all you men in something different to tiresome black and white," she exclaimed impulsively.

"I don't see why men shouldn't wear colours now, as our great-grandparents used to do."

Mr. Thorpe, who did not feel at home in his costume, protested in favour of the conventional evening dress, but murmured some complimentary remarks concerning the blue brocade. Eleanor waved them aside very impatiently.

"Oh, you are blind," she said. "Give me the ruffled shirt-front, the brocaded waistcoat and blue or scarlet coat of long ago. It is like a dream to-night—" She raised her eyes as she spoke, and the words died on her lips, for she saw *him*.

He was coming towards her—a man in the dress she had described, a man with dark, eager eyes, and a smile upon his lips. He was talking earnestly to his partner, but he looked up, and Eleanor's glance met his for an instant—speechless wonder in her eyes, surprised admiration in his.

Her fingers tightened on her partner's arm, and he turned quickly, alarmed at the sudden pallor of her face. "Miss Worth, are you ill?" he asked anxiously. "Let me——"

"No, no!" she whispered quickly; "just let me sit down a moment—there in that quiet corner—and would you get my fan? It is nothing, nothing. I shall be all right in a moment or two. Don't worry."

Mr. Thorpe left her in the flowery shelter, and hastened for the fan and her mother.

The colour came back to the girl's cheeks as she found herself alone—grateful for the few moments solitude in which to collect her thoughts and quiet her leaping pulses.

She put her hand to her head. Was she dreaming? Could she be mad? Surely, surely she had looked into the eyes—into the living, eager eyes of the original of her miniature—the eyes she knew so well!

There could be no mistake. Had not that face lived in her heart since she was a mere child? With trembling fingers she drew out the miniature and gazed at it earnestly; then from her shelter she looked timidly forth in search of the apparition of a few minutes since. Gordon Thorpe was approaching, the fan in his hand, her mother on his arm.

"Eleanor—" she began in an alarmed tone of voice, but the girl laughed.

"Don't be anxious, mamma; it was just a little attack. Thank you, Mr. Thorpe. No, I don't want to go home," as her mother began to protest. "I am all right now, and wouldn't miss the ball for anything."

Before Mrs. Worth could say more, two men drew near, one an old friend of her husband, the other—

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Eleanor drew a deep breath, and steadied herself by leaning against the back of her chair.

"Mrs. Worth," began the elder gentleman, "may I present you to my young friend, Mr. Allston? Robert Allston, of Aberdeen. Miss Worth, Mr. Allston."

The young man bowed low, and both ladies responded graciously, although the younger one's eyes fell shyly as she met his bright, eager glance.

"Allston, Allston," repeated Mrs. Worth. "Ah, you don't belong to the Allstons I know. My mother had a dear friend, a Miss Allston."

"I think it probable that I do belong to the same family, madam," replied the young man in a rich, pleasant voice. "My paternal grandfather was born in this country, I believe, and my great-aunt, Miss Emily Allston, died here not a year ago."

"Why, that was the name of mother's friend," said Mrs. Worth. "It is strange I had forgotten; but then, one has so many demands on one's time in these days, and I really can't remember half my own acquaintances." She laughed uneasily, feeling that she had betrayed indifference towards her mother's old friend, and hastened to add: "I hope you are to remain here some time, Mr. Allston. It will give us pleasure to see you at our home, and——"

The orchestra began to play a dreamy waltz, and the hall was filling.

Mr. Allston thanked Mrs. Worth for her hospitality, and turned to her daughter.

"Miss Worth, may I have the honour of dancing this with you?" he asked.

And Eleanor stepped forward.

"Do you think you ought to dance?" asked her mother, anxiously.

"Of course; I am all right now," replied the girl quickly. "Don't feel uneasy."

"But you were faint," argued the mother.

"You need have no fear, Mrs. Worth," interrupted the young man, "I will take care of her."

And waiting for no further protest he led Eleanor away.

His decided manner made her heart beat fast.

Being of a pliant nature herself, she delighted in strong spirited characters. Young Lochinvar and his like had ever been favourite heroes of hers; the men she knew were too deferring, too yielding, to please her; but this Robert Allston did not belie his looks in the least.

"Is he the prince of the fairy tales?" she whispered to herself. "Am I a dreamer, or a wide-awake, rational person?"

She felt the colour flooding her face, and looked up to meet her partner's gaze.

They had waltzed to the other end of the hall, and stopped dancing. He led her to a quiet seat in a green corner.

"I must keep my promise to your mother," he said, smiling, "and I want to talk—don't you?"

It was the first time he had really spoken directly to her, except to ask her to dance. Suddenly Eleanor's fluttering ceased. She felt perfectly quiet and at home Why not? Was she not with an old, old friend? Had she not been waiting to meet him all her life?

"Yes, I do want to talk," she said, looking up earnestly. "I want to ask you about your great-aunt who lived here."

Mr. Allston smiled, that little amused smile she knew.

"I am not sure I had her in mind," he said, opening and closing Eleanor's great fan, "but I am very willing to listen."

"Was she a dear little old lady with a small pale face?" began the girl, "and did she live in a strange old house that smelt always of——"

"My dear Miss Worth, I'm afraid I cannot answer your questions satisfactorily. I never saw my great-aunt, but I don't doubt your description is correct. As to the house—but why are you so interested?"

"Ah, because I spent a day with her once—I am sure it must have been with her—when I was a little girl, you know, and it was all so sweet and dim and beautiful, I have remembered it ever since. It was there I first saw—" She stopped suddenly, a hot blush surging over her face.

"Did you," she went on again in a few moments, "did you ever visit your aunt when you were a child? Did you ever wish to play with the brass balls on her claw-foot furniture—or to run about her big rooms? But you say you never saw her. I forgot that."

The young man looked decidedly puzzled.

"Miss Worth, I confess you are reading me riddles," he said, laughing. "Will you explain what you mean?"

"I was only thinking of that day when I was a child. Some time perhaps——"

She paused, for Mr. Thorpe stood before her.

"This is my dance, I believe," he said, and she could only smile at the annoyed flash that shone in Robert Allston's eyes, and consent to be led away.

When she saw her mother, later in the evening, that lady said, abruptly:

"Eleanor, who does Mr. Allston remind me of? I've been watching him all the evening. He's a handsome fellow, but there is a resemblance to somebody. It puzzles me."

"Did you ever know his father or grandfather?" asked Miss Worth, carelessly. "It may be some family resemblance."

"His grandfather was an old man when I knew him; perhaps this young man is like him—but it isn't that I am thinking of."

Eleanor did not suggest the miniature, but it had not left her thoughts for a moment. Should she confide in the new-comer and surrender her treasure?

There was no time for further thought then; he was coming towards her, a favour in his hand—a string of gilt balls which he smilingly dropped in her lap.

In a flash her dream of the night before came to her. She fastened the favour on her dress as she arose. She would not let him fade away as he had faded in the dream.

They had not waltzed long when she said suddenly: "Mr. Allston, would you mind sitting out this dance? There are several questions I must ask you."

"About—my great-aunt?" he asked.

"Yes," said Eleanor, as they sat down; "it is very unconventional, perhaps, to bother you with such strange things at a first meeting, but you do not seem like a stranger. I feel that I have known you a long time—because—ah, you will think me very personal, but you will understand by-and-by. Are you like your father or grandfather, Mr. Allston? I have a particular reason for wishing to know if you are."

She looked up with a daring little smile that was almost bewitching to the man who was gazing at her with puzzled admiration. She was very different from any girl he had ever met before.

"Well," he said, with that little half-suppressed smile, "I believe I am said to be a 'true Allston' whatever that may mean."

"And your christian name is—Robert?"

She said it with a shy lowering of the voice that made him exclaim impulsively, "Oh, say it again!" but Miss Worth paid no heed to his request.

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"R. A.," she repeated as to herself. "And your grandmother—did she have have light hair?"

"That I cannot say," replied the young man, "I only remember it as grey."

"That brings me to the miniature," she went on again, as to herself. "There can be no doubt now."

"The miniature?" he repeated after her.

"Pray, Miss Worth, when are you to give me the answer to your riddles? I confess to being consumed with curiosity."

"I saw it at your aunt's that day when I was a little child," she went on. "It was lying on her dressing-table. It must have been a miniature of your grandfather. Did you never see it?"

"No; all those things were left with Aunt Emily in the old house, and now—" He paused, for Eleanor had drawn out the miniature and laid it in his hand.

"So that is my grandfather!" he exclaimed, looking down at the eager face.

"And it might easily be yourself—to-night," she added smiling.

"Might it? Then that accounts for your questioning."

He turned the little case over. "R.A.," he read. "And here are two locks of hair. My grandmother's the light one, of course. It is the colour of yours. Well, perhaps, I do look like this portrait, in my present rig. I found it in Aunt Emily's attic, by-the-way. That is what made me decide to come to-night."

"And are you staying in that dear old house?" questioned Eleanor delightedly. "Oh, I remember it so well."

Robert Allston smiled a little sadly.

"I fear you would find only the fragrance of damp and mould there now," he said, "and nearly all the old things have dropped to pieces or gone."

"Ah, yes; and the dear little old lady, she is gone, too. No; I should not want to go again. I should rather keep it the dream house it has always been to me."

"But how did you come by this miniature, Miss Worth?" he asked suddenly. "Did she give it to you?"

"No. I found it in a curiosity-shop last spring. I have a love for antiques, you know," she added hastily, "and when I saw this it called up that day of my childhood, and I felt I must buy it. Then, too, I was always hoping I might find the dear little old lady again and give it back to her; but the man did not know her address, and mamma couldn't remember anything about it. Oh, how could she have sold it, Mr. Allston? Pardon me, but it is such a mystery."

"It need be no mystery," he replied, with a touch of pride in his voice. "My aunt was supposed to have a good income, and my father never knew till after her death that she had lost much of her property, and was really in great need at the end. Instead of applying to him, or even hinting of it in her letters, she began to sell the furniture and things—you see, they were old and valuable, and it was probable that her mind was affected, too, for she was very old."

"Poor little old lady, poor little dear!" exclaimed the girl pityingly. "To think of her all alone in that sweet old house, and actually brought to selling the treasures of generations! Oh, it is too pitiful!"

"We did not know; we thought all was well," he said, as though he felt reproach in her words. "She had a faithful attendant with her, and we never dreamt of the loneliness in which she must have lived, forgotten by her friends—nay, they are probably all dead, too. My father is an invalid, and has not left home for years. That is why I was sent here to settle Aunt Emily's affairs after her death, and——"

"To find you," he was going to add. Then he remembered he had only met her that evening.

Eleanor dashed away the mist that had clouded her eyes.

"It seems that I have been keeping this for you, then," she said, and with the prettiest little gesture in the world she surrendered the miniature, stifling a regretful sigh meanwhile.

"No," he said quickly, "it is yours. I have no right; I do not wish—pray keep it; for the present, at any rate," he pleaded. "It is part of your costume, you know, to-night," and he smiled again, but added more gravely: "Some day, perhaps——"

"Ah, Mr. Allston, I have wanted to speak to you again."

It was Mrs. Worth's voice that broke in upon the *tête-à-tête*.

"I am so glad to have met a descendant of my mother's old friends, and I hope we may see more of you. Will you dine with us to-morrow? We are to have a few friends with us."

Robert Allston accepted the invitation very promptly and blessed the unconscious giver. Then, bidding Eleanor good-night, he left them and they saw him no more that evening.

* * * * *

A month had passed, and it had brought a lifetime of experience to the slender girl who was making her way across the public gardens one afternoon. She had suddenly awakened to life. It tingled in her heart-throbs, it glowed in her eyes.

Oh, how good it was to be alive, to be, to do! Dreaming was sweet, but the waking reality was better; and yet they were so wholly blended, could she ever be able to distinguish one from the other?

"Am I the same girl?" she said half aloud, and then the glow on her cheeks and in her eyes deepened, for someone was coming towards her.

"Miss Eleanor, how fortunate! I was so eager to see you before I go."

"Before you go?" she repeated, looking at him.

He wore a black muffler, which seemed to take the place of the stock of the miniature, and made the likeness vivid.

"Yes; I am called home. I must leave to-night, but I could not go without seeing you—I could not."

"You mustn't stay away long—you will come back?" she murmured, a shadow passing over the glory in her eyes.

"Yes; I will come back," he said, "I will come if you will let me—oh! if you forbid, I must still come and stay near you."

Her eyes fell before his earnest gaze.

"It may seem strange—abrupt to you," he went on. "It is a month since we met. It might as well be years or hours. It is not a matter of time when we meet our own—we know them at once. Dear girl! don't turn away; I am a rash, impulsive fellow, I grant you, but I can't go without opening my heart to you. And you knew it all—you are not surprised?"

"No," said Eleanor quietly, "I am not surprised. I think I have been waiting all my life for just this moment. And, really I've known you always, you know."

She looked up, the sweet calm of happiness in her eyes, and her lover could not lift his gaze from her face.

"You were always the Prince in the story for me," she went on. "Your face has been in my heart all these years—oh yes, I know it was not really yours, but it has always been your face to me," and she laid her hand over her heart, where the miniature had lain since their first meeting. "I have been like the sleeping Princess," she said. "I have been waiting for you, Robert, and you have come to waken me to life."

Frank Silvester.

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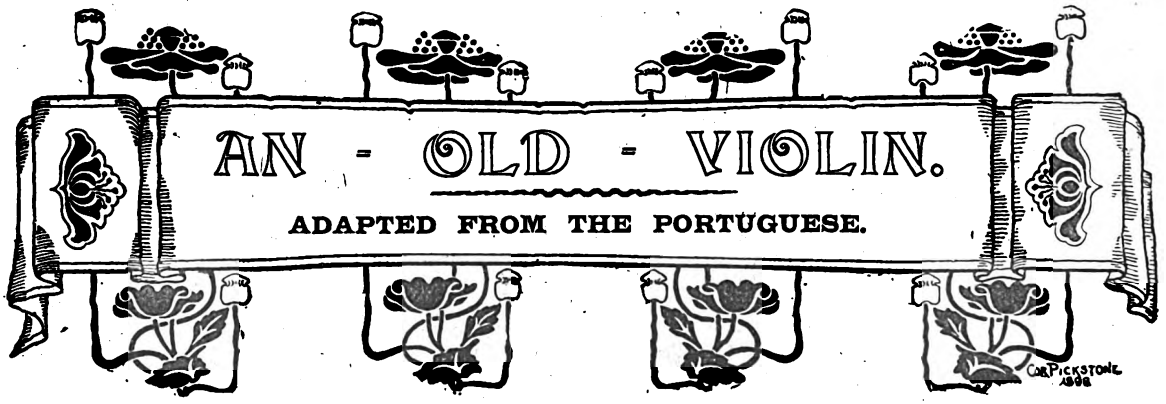

JACOB SAMUELS stood at the door of his shop, looking up and down the narrow street. Business was bad—decidedly so—and Samuels was low-spirited in consequence. During the past three days, transactions in the "second-hand" line had been very few, and in every instance the customer had been a seller—not one solitary buyer had entered the shop.

Second-hand dealers of the Hebrew persuasion are popularly looked upon as the embodiment of all that is cunning and unscrupulous; however erroneous this idea may be, there is no question that Samuels deserved to be so classified. "There is only one gentleman who can get over Samuels," once remarked a customer who had (as usual) come off very much "second best" in a deal with the old Jew; a remark which met with general approval. Only once had the Hebrew been "done," and that was by an exceptionally astute Gentile several years ago; and his neighbours and friends did not fail to remind him of it.

Lost in thought, Samuels gazed vacantly up the street; so absorbed was he that he quite forgot to keep watch on the other end of the thoroughfare, and he nearly jumped back into his shop with fright, when he felt a touch upon his shoulder.

The new-comer was a man about thirty. He was dressed in a shabby-genteel suit, but wore a pair of boots which no beggar would have considered worth picking up. He carried what appeared to be a violin in a bag of green baize.

"I understand that you lend money on valuable articles, Mr. Samuels," said the man.

"Certainly!" replied the dealer, with a furtive glance at the bag.

The man opened the bag, and drew out a violin of very ancient pattern.

"This instrument has been in our family for ages," said he. "I am not a musician, but I know that it worth a lot of money. You needn't smile," he continued, as the Jew uttered a little incredulous titter. "I am not going to ask you to lend me a large sum on it. The fact is, I have been out of work for months, and have just got a situation; I must go decently dressed, but I can't rake up any more money; yet I can't possibly go in these boots. That's the long and the short of it. Will you lend me half a sovereign on it? I will redeem it in two days."

Samuels took the violin, examined it, and played a few bars upon it. The instrument was certainly worth much more than ten shillings, and there was every probability of its not being redeemed. However, Samuels was not going to give the sum asked for the violin, if he could help it; so he began to raise objections in a plausible, gentlemanly manner—for the Jew was (unlike most of his trade) a fairly well-educated man. But, innocent as the customer appeared, he was not to be moved, and stuck doggedly to his price. Finally, Samuels agreed, on condition that the instrument should be redeemed at twelve shillings, and within two days; if not redeemed within that time it should become the property of Jacob Samuels, Esq.

The customer consented to the conditions after some hesitation, and the money was paid over, not, however, until the dealer had tried to sell the man a second-hand pair of boots worth about half what the Jew wanted for them.

"Take care of it," exclaimed the man, as he left the shop. "Keep it dry, and let it be in the light, or the wood will be injured, and I'll sue you for damages! Better let it hang in the window."

Samuels intended to examine the violin more closely after the owner had departed, but another customer—a buyer this time—came in; so he hastily hung it up in the window. His pleasure at the bargain which he succeeded in making with the second customer caused him to forget the family relic just deposited with him.

However busy a day it might be, very few persons came between twelve and one o'clock, and the second-hand dealer took advantage of this lull in business to get his midday meal in the little shop parlour. He had just finished his dinner on the following day, and had taken up the paper to have a quiet read, when he was interrupted by the tinkling of a bell, which announced the entrance of a customer. Hurrying out of his parlour, Samuels found himself face to face with an elderly man, well dressed, and wearing a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, who had the appearance of a professional. He seemed somewhat excited.

"I should like to look at that Cremona—I mean that violin—in the window," he said, without heeding the shopkeeper's "Good morning."

The Jew pricked up his ears at the word "Cremona," but said nothing. He unhooked the instrument and

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handed it to the gentleman, who (he felt sure) was a professional musician.

The old gentleman looked at it carefully, turned it this way and that in an excited manner, and finally exclaimed:

"A genuine Stradivarius, by all that's musical!"

"*Mosheh!*" exclaimed the Jew under his breath. (This, the Hebrew for Moses, was his favourite exclamation when disturbed by any kind of emotion). He knew what a "genuine Stradivarius" meant.

"Where's the bow?" asked the musician.

"Here it is, sir," replied Samuels, bringing it forth.

The old gentleman tuned the instrument and walked up and down the little shop, seemingly quite forgetting the Jew's presence, playing the violin in a manner which proved him to be a capable musician.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, stopping near the door. "There's no doubt about it—it's a real Strad. How much do you want for this?" he asked, walking up to Samuels.

"How much will you give for it?" The Jew was too wily to name a price.

"Ah, yes!" said the musician. "I did wrong in saying that it was a Stradivarius; I ought to have kept that to myself, because you will clap on the price now. But I couldn't control my feelings."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Samuels, with assumed dignity; "I quite understand the makes of violins."

"Well, well! Come, now, Mr.—er—Mr. ——"

"Samuels, at your service!"

"Ah, yes, Mr. Samuels. Well, you mustn't drive too hard a bargain; suppose we say forty pounds, now?"

Forty pounds! Samuels nearly gasped with surprise. Then his face fell, for the real position had suddenly flashed across his mind. The violin was not his to sell!

"I am sorry, but I can't——" he began.

"Come, come; don't be too hard," interrupted the other. "I'm sure forty pounds is a fair offer."

"But I really cannot sell it——"

"Say fifty, then," said the would-be purchaser, not giving the Jew time to say more. "I won't make a farthing advance on that!"

"It isn't mine to sell!" the Jew blurted out desperately. And then he explained how matters stood.

The musician looked disappointed, but soon recovered his composure.

"There will be no difficulty about that," he said in a tone of conviction. "A man who is so hard up will jump at fifty pounds, even if the violin is a family heirloom! You try him when he comes to-morrow; give him something down. I will give you a sovereign deposit, and I'll look in to-morrow afternoon to see how you have managed."

He took a sovereign out of a bulky purse, handed the coin with a card bearing a name with several letters after it, to the shopkeeper, and went off.

Samuels sat down and thought it over. He must get that man to sell the instrument by hook or by crook. There wasn't time to get another violin and "fake" it so as to deceive the owner, so he must work upon the man's necessity, which meant so much less profit for himself. Well, there was no help for it, and he must trust to his superior intelligence to make as much as possible out of the transaction. But perhaps the man would not be able to redeem it within the prescribed time. The bare idea made his heart leap for joy.

But his pleasant expectations concerning the non-redemption of the violin were quickly upset. That very afternoon, although but little more than half the time had elapsed, the owner entered the shop, his face radiant with smiles.

"Here I am!" he cried. "Got the money sooner than I thought. Where is it?"

"My dear sir," said Samuels in his most suave manner, "I have had an opportunity of selling it at a very high figure."

"What?" raved the owner. "Do you mean to say that you have sold it?"

"Oh, dear, no!" said Samuels. "Calm yourself. I said that I had had an opportunity of selling it at a high figure. I was offered £10 for it."

"Ten pounds!" echoed the man scornfully. "Why, I would not take forty for it!"

The Jew's heart sank. It was evident that he would not make so much profit as he had hoped. Still, he did not despair of getting several pounds out of the transaction. He had no doubt that he could induce the man to sell.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed pleasantly. "I thought you wouldn't take ten; but, of course, you will take twenty if I can get that sum?"

"No, I won't!" was the man's emphatic rejoinder.

This was rather disturbing. Samuels tried an advance of five pounds, with the same result. At last, after nearly half an hour had been spent in haggling and persuading, Samuels undertook to get thirty-five pounds for it, and the owner agreed to accept that sum provided that he had it cash down at once. This led to further discussion, but ultimately the Jew—fearing that the man, now that he knew the value of the violin, would take it elsewhere, and he (Samuels) would lose all—agreed to give the owner thirty pounds down. The offer was accepted, the money paid, and the transaction completed in due form.

Samuels was satisfied; a profit of twenty pounds in so short a time helped to make up for recent bad times. Moreover, he might succeed in squeezing a little more out of the old gentleman, who wanted the instrument badly.

Samuels would have liked to go to the address given on the card and conclude the business at once, but that would have been detrimental to success. He must wait till the following afternoon.

It would be difficult to describe Samuels' feelings as the time approached; it would be still more difficult to describe them when the afternoon had passed without the old gentleman having put in an appearance; and it would be simply impossible to give any adequate idea of them when, on making his way later in the evening to the address given, he discovered that there was no such number in the street! And, to crown all, a friend in the line informed him that the violin was worth about thirty shillings!

He was done, outwitted, swindled! How he raved and swore! How he cursed the deceitful Gentiles for robbing an honest Hebrew! He literally cried himself to sleep that night.

The next morning's post brought him a letter. It was very short, and ran thus:

"Two years ago you swindled me out of twenty-five pounds. I have now got my own back.—Moses Levy."

He remembered the affair well enough. He had been outwitted this time, and he must put up with it. The only consolation he had was that he had not been done by a Gentile.

Ewart Rathan.

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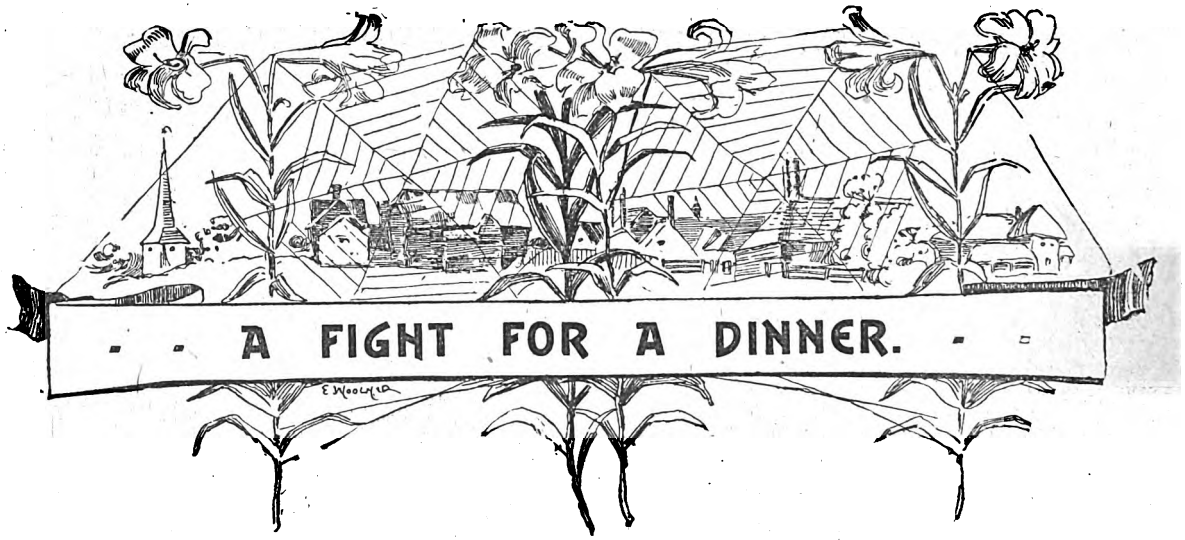

OLD PERIKOP, the swordsman, was sitting by the open window in his fencing gallery twisting the waxed ends of his grey moustache, in deep thought. He had been giving a lesson, and the foils and masks lay upon the floor where they had been carelessly thrown.

The fencing gallery was a large square room, hung with all manner of swords, rapiers, sabres, and small arms. I had brought a bottle of red wine with me—the Bordeaux the old man liked—and that put him in a good humour.

"It is the war song of the Rhine—the Marseillaise Hymn—that the band in the street is playing," he said, smiling. "That makes me think of many years ago. Yes! Of a cousin I once had—Jacques Bernard by name—Bernard of the Chasseurs d'Afrique in the Crimea. He is dead now. He was a very good swordsman, accustomed to use Du Pradet's thrust in *quarte* under the wrist—a tricky Italian method, but effective. There was no escaping his moves!" The old man's brown and corded hands trembled as he drew off his buckskin sword glove.

"Why, that music brought Pinaud into my mind, then. Old Pinaud, of the Grenadiers of the Guard; old Pinaud, who took the Turk's dinner!"

The swordsman chuckled gleefully as he rolled a cigarette.

"I will tell you while we drink the wine.

"We fought for that dinner.

"You were not born then, but many good men were in the world, nevertheless. Jacques, my cousin, was one of them. It was at the seige of Sebastopol, the last day of the bombardment and the night before the assault in which the city fell. I was in the Zovaves of the Guard, then.

"Jacques came into the ragged tent at sunset and sat down on my old haversack, to shiver over the faggot fire. He drew his horse-blanket havelock over his head, tucked his big sabre between his muddy legs, and spread his frozen hands out over the embers. 'Twas a weapon that disgusted him, that sabre, but it was the arm of his corps, you understand.

"He was wet and cold, poor Jacques. The end of his long thin nose was red as the coals and his pale blue eyes watered with misery. A muddy and melancholy Chasseur d'Afrique; a lean, hungry and hollow-eyed soldier of France.

"I surveyed him regretfully from my sheepskin and listened to the roar of the siege guns and the groan of the big Lancaster of the English the gun that battered the White Tower and threw a hail of balls to Fort Constantine, over the bay. The old tent was filled with smoke that set us coughing and choking.

"Jacques' head was close-cropped and red, to mate with his nose, and the ends of his fiery hair thrust down on top of his bony brow. Jacques' legs were long and strong, his eyes keen and sharp, though watery with the smoke, and his mustachios enormous and red like his hair.

"On that cheerless night, when my cousin came from the trenches to smoke a cigarette with me, his heart was faint and sick within his starved and shivering body, and we talked of many things concerning the army, as soldiers will: the hard winter, and the water, cold as ice, in the trenches where we had to stuff sandbags and construct gabions and fascines; the mad English cavalry, and Balaclava, and all the miseries of the siege.

"'Do you know, Jean,' said my cousin, 'last night I dreamt of roast capon.'

"'Poor Jacques,' said I, 'you are light-headed with hunger; in the Crimea there is not even a goose——'

"'A goose!' cried my cousin. 'I could devour the feathers of a goose. I would throw myself under the guns of the Malakoff for a gosling. Those wolves of Cossacks have guillotined all the geese. Besides, no goose would stay in this forsaken place. B-r-r! 'Tis bitter cold in this habitation of yours. I am both cold and starved.'

"'Cheer up! Pinaud is coming to-night; he has a bottle of brandy.'

"Just then there was a noise without, and a head was thrust in at the flap of the tent. It was Pinaud of the Grenadiers, who poked in his kepi and bullet-head, and followed them with his great body. He came in with

the brandy under his arm and set his musket down by Jacques' sword. A hoary old bandit, let me tell you, with his great hooked nose, and his little twinkling eyes set so close together on each side of it.

"'Ah, my infants!' he cried, 'I am famishing with thirst—and I have something to tell you. It was from Gaston Laporte I got it.'

"'The gunner who was killed at the river, yesterday?' said Jacques.

"'The same. Pass the bottle, Jacques.'

"'I was about to relate,' he went on, 'there is a little camel of the artillery that accompanied me hither, though unwillingly. To-night he goes upon a journey. I found him tied to a gun-carriage singing like a howling Dervish in the stillness of the night. Well, yesterday morning, before the attack, Gaston came to inquire, did I prefer naked goose to black bread?'

"'Gracious!' cried Jacques, 'my dream has come true! Tell us quick! We are going for them or is this but one of your great lies?'

"Pinaud drained the cup we were drinking the brandy out of, and set it upon his knee, smacking his lips.

"'In the time of Pharoah, King of Egypt, you were, no doubt, a wind instrument: for you make much noise even yet,' said he.

"Then he told us the geese were two in number, and in the possession of the pasha, a German officer of Turks. Both geese and Turks were encamped at the back of our third division, over the hill by the sailors' camp.

"Jaques hastily buckled on one of my light rapiers. 'Finish the bottle first,' said Pinaud.

"'We will take it with us,' said my cousin. 'The camp is full of thieves.'

"'Good! We will drink deeply to the blue frock of France,' said Pinaud.

"'Hurry, my children. I will leave the musket (as one does not steal geese with muskets) and take Jacques' sabre. In my youth I was familiar with the weapon.'

"We went out, and Pinaud climbed into the cart, his sabre clanking against the wheel. My cousin and I followed him.

"A rough ride it was, through that great war-camp and over the hill, jolting through the ice-sheeted mud. The camel flew along like the winds of the Bosphorus, and though our leader remarked that to the contented all seats were soft, we were sore and weary when the flickering lights appeared before us down in the hollow—for we were then skirting the hillside. The red glare and the roar of cannon were behind us, and we proceeded, reconnoitering with caution. Finally Pinaud brought the camel to a standstill.

"'Listen!' said he, descending from the cart and handing me the driving strap; 'yonder to the left is the camp of the English sailors; Jean shall continue to argue with this evil-minded animal and persuade him forward on the road to the sailors' camp, the distance of a musket-shot, and there await us. There is an aperture to enter, therefore Jacques, who is thin, shall go with me. That pasha is fond of drink and, I am told, likes to smoke opium, and sleeps much; furthermore, those ridiculous Turks keep no guard. Jacques, my boy, I lead; do you follow and make but little noise!'

"They disappeared in the darkness, and I turned the camel's head down the Karany Road. At that point where the road branched off to the Monastery of St. George was located a telegraph battery, between the third and fourth divisions on the line. In front of the battery the brute stopped, having some matter to settle in his mind, no doubt. I ceased to remonstrate with him and sat listening to the gunners who were smoking round an embrasure, a few feet away. The siege guns were booming on the other side of the hill, like long rolls of thunder, and the sky was red with their fire.

"'Those blue and red foreign devils,' said a bushy-bearded Crim-Tartar, who was leaning over the banquet, holding his long-barrelled Yaki rifle across the embrasure, 'fight among themselves; also they make merry while so doing.' And he went on to relate to the gunners the circumstances of a vendetta of his own, a family disagreement with his brother-in-law.

"Soon after, Pinaud and Jacques came dashing headlong down the road; Jacqes had his naked rapier in his hand, and our friend carried a dead goose under each arm. Both leapt into the car and Jacques prodded the camel with his rapier.

"The furious beast leapt forward, and rolled out into the ditch from the sudden jerk. I heard my comrades try to stop him, but he was off like the wind, and three Turks ran past me in close pursuit. I took to my heels after them all.

"There was nothing else to do.

"I was saluted with the sound of clashing steel as I ran into sailors' camp, and the camel emitting unearthly screams. There were torches set up in the clearing about which the tents were staked out, and a great fire burned up at one side. There was plenty of light for what was going on.

"Pinaud and Jacques stood at each wheel of the cart defending themselves against the onslaught of the three Turks. One was the German officer of whom Pinaud had spoken; he was engaging my cousin with the sword, and Jacques derided and jeered him as he fought. The other two had their heels kept busy dodging Pinaud's savage sabre strokes.

"'*Allons*,' cried Pinaud, slashing away as I came up. 'Zouaves to the rescue. Ah, you villain, would you?'

"My coming changed the face of the battle. The Turks fell back, reluctant to continue the engagement on equal terms, and the pasha swore, out of reach of Jacques' rapier. So there we waited: Jacques and Pinaud at the wheels, the camel in front, and I behind at the cart tail; all ready and willing; and the geese, I saw with satisfaction, were safely reposing in the bottom of the cart—two great fat white ones. And the English sailors looked on with amusement.

"'I warn you, monsieur,' said Jacques to the pasha, 'if you attack again, I will kill you.'

"'And I,' said Pinaud to the soldier, 'will separate your head from your unlovely body. All things have a beginning, a middle, and an end. When I have finished, you will have but two ends; so be advised. Come, charge again, I pray you; I am getting cold.'

"'You abandoned thieves! My geese! My geese!' cried the pasha.

"The sailors laughed at him. I could see their sympathies were with us, their allies, and Pinaud began to sing the war song of the Rhine. (That is why the band reminded me.)

"'Look out, Bono,' said the little English officer (they called the Turks so, the allies). 'Heaven help you if you run up against that sword again. That Chasseur will split you.'

"How that German raved, and the sailors laughed!

"'Better give it up, pasha,' said the little middy again.

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"'I will give up when they give me up my geese that they stole!' cried the German, 'I will kill them otherwise. They and the other one.'

"'You mistake,' said I. 'I am of the rescuing party.'

"'They ran off with them in the cart,' cried the pasha foaming with rage. 'And that Zouave was driving.'

"'More lies,' said Jacques; ''twas not we but that camel who ran off. Drive him? You do not know that beast with the crooked legs!'

"'Besides, if you kill me,' remarked Pinaud gravely, as if weighing the matter in his mind, 'you not only will have killed a Grenadier, which is difficult, but a great philosopher also, which is wicked.'

"The pasha thrust his hand into the breast of his frock, and the little officer took a step toward him.

"'Be careful there, you fellows!' he cried out.

"'Once more,' said the pasha, 'will you give up my geese?'

"'A goose once took shelter with gods,' mocked Pinaud.

"He had hardly spoken when the Englishman called out quickly and the cowardly renegade fired at my cousin. The ball whisked by me, going wide, and struck the camel in the hindquarters. With a wail of agony the brute fled, dragging the cart and geese with him. At the same instant the German and the Turks precipitated themselves upon us."

The old swordsman fell silent so long, gazing out of the window, that I finally asked:

"How did it come out, Perikop?"

"My cousin Jacques was a very good swordsman, very good. A Master of the White Arm. Next to me, in the whole French army. We had opportunities to try in those days. Pinaud, too, could use the sabre, old as he was. It was but click, glissade—lunge. Ah! as Jacques would say. That is, for two of us; for Pinaud simply knocked his antagonist's sword into the air and the Turk fled.

"I myself scorned to destroy one with so foolish an arm as that Turk of mine had; so I simply disarmed him, after a pass or two, and he followed his comrade. With Jacques and the German it was different—for the pasha carried a good weapon—but it was quickly done. So quickly that the little English officer, running in, was too late. Perhaps he did not run too rapidly. Even before I turned around to see, I heard that rattlesnake glissade, the tap, tap, with the foot and a queer little gr-r-rate, slip-slip-slip-se-e-ep, of steel on steel, and I knew that renegade German was looking right down into the jaws of death.

"Slip-slip; so quickly (it was to make his head swim, you see), and then—well—then, just a little soft sob and like a woman almost—wiped the blood from his rapier with the pasha's cap."

"So you lost the geese, Perikop?" I asked, as the old man paused again.

"The geese were cooked and eaten that night—rather that morning. It was so. When the pasha fell, the little Englishman rattled out an order to his men, and whispered to us to go away, not like that, but, 'Run, you beggaires, run. I'll have the men put him down the road. It was done fair and square.'

"Yes yes, that is what he said, that little boy."

"And you took that good advice?" I asked.

"We did. Though we feared nothing much. The Turks were not loved in the Crimea, and their officers from Germany less.

"It was a long way to the French camp, but we went hurriedly, sorrowfully. No, not for the pasha. I had forgotten him. For the geese, that cost us so much labour. We were sad, for who could tell where the fruits of our industry had gone? The brandy, too, that Jacques had left with his blanket in the cart.

"There was but one road, and we followed it, hoping to get some trace of the four-footed deserter, but no, there was no sign of him; and we approached the camp, the deafening gun and the glare of the firing, cast down, grieved to the heart.

"As we entered the camp and approached the quarters of the artillery, in faint hope that the beast might have returned, we had to pass my tent. In front was a strange and shapeless object in the darkness.

"Our hearts beat furiously. A voice called out:

"'Monsieur Perikop, Monsieur Bernard! I have captured your camel. There are too gee——'

"'Silence!' hissed Jacques. 'Where found you them Phillipe?' It was long-legged Phillipe, the drummer of the Red Ones, who sat within the cart.

"'I saw you go,' said Phillipe. 'I was down the road seeking wood, and met Monsieur of the Desert returning much pressed for time. There is the bottle too. The assault is ordered for daybreak.'

"Jacques threw his arms round the scraggy neck of the camel and embraced him ardently, and the camel bit him. He also kicked Pinaud, who would likewise have embraced him, but because of his many virtues we forgave him his shortcomings.

"We bound up, against his will, his wound, which was trifling, and sent him home shivering to the artillery by Phillippe.

"We feasted that night, Phillipe (to whom we owed everything), Jacques, the abbe and I. Next morning the sun fell. It was cold that morning, I can tell you.

"Afterwards Phillipe, full of goose, helped the drummers chant a Missa Solemnis for the souls of the slaughtered—who were many as the locusts of Alsirra—and we three listened though the Zouaves were the first into the Malakoff and the ditch was full of their dead.

"The English lost heavily at the Redan, too. In the evening I saw their wounded going down to the boats. Among them, on a stretcher, was the little sailor officer with his arm shot off. He recognised me and called out faintly, with his brave, white face: 'Hello, old Sword-blade. Why didn't you send me a piece of that goose, you beggaire?'

"Ah! I was always sorry for that. I bent over and kissed him. 'I would, but I can't shake,' he sobbed, and the sailors who carried the stretcher turned round their heads to swear softly and cough. I went with him to the boats to say farewell for ever. In those days it was the fate of soldiers."

The wine was finished with the story, so I went away. At the head of the stairs I thought the old swordsman called me, and I went back to the door. He was sitting by the window still, talking to himself, as the dying rays of the sun slanted across his gaunt, old form.

"The war song. Yes, yes; old Pinaud, the abbé, sang it at the wheel. And of the sword? The song of the sword? That was my cousin's song:

"'A sword for honour,
A sword for love,
A sword for the cure of all thing above.'"

G. Bevellé.

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THE LAVERTON MANOR MYSTERY.

Of course, there was considerable excitement in the neighbourhood when it became known that there had been a most mysterious robbery at Laverton Manor. The safe had been opened and a very valuable diamond necklace had been carried off by some thief or thieves who had left no clue behind them.

That was the substance of the few details which reached the ears of the villagers and the surrounding gentry, on the early morning of a spring day, just six years ago. Little by little, other details became known, and the occurrence assumed a still more serious aspect.

Mr. William Parker, the squire of Laverton, was a man about fifty years of age, a widower with one son. His father had died when he was quite young, and his mother had married again, and had another son by her second husband. She had lived away from the Manor after her second marriage, and the fine old place had been left to the charge of caretakers until the young heir had been old enough to take possession. It was clear that there had been very little affection between the mother and her eldest son, and it was equally evident that there was no love lost between the half-brothers.

The diamond necklace in question was one of the family heirlooms; at least, it was generally considered so, but it had not been in the family for very long, having been purchased by Mr. William Parker's father just before his marriage. Most people thought it was to "remain in the family," but the actual disposition of the necklace was peculiar.

It was left to Mr. William Parker and was to go to his daughter if he had one, but if he had no daughter it was to be handed over to any female issue of Mrs. Parker by a later marriage if her husband pre-deceased her.

The necklace had remained in the present owner's possession and had been worn on one or two occasions by his wife, but death had robbed him of her after a brief interval, leaving him with a son, but no daughter. Mrs. Mellowes, to call her by her second name, had no daughter, but it was contended by her and her solicitors that the wording of the will should be interpreted to mean that the necklace should go to her son's daughter if one were born to him.

To this, Mr. William Parker, in a weak moment, assented without question and signed the document to that effect, simply claiming that the valuable ornament should remain in his charge until the grand-daughter, if any, reached the age of twenty-one. His solicitors said he was mad, and in later years he himself was inclined to think so; but the dispute arose at a time when he was overwhelmed with grief at the loss of his beloved wife, and the thing was done.

A daughter was born to his half-brother, which did not make matters any more pleasant between the latter and the owner of Laverton Manor, who now regarded it as almost certain that the necklace would go out of his hands. His annoyance was increased to bitterness and actual enmity by the fact that Mr. Mellowes insisted upon his half-brother showing the necklace once each year during the minority of the young lady.

Time passed on and in three months Miss Mellowes would be in a position to claim the ornament. Mr. Parker had requested that the annual formality of showing the necklace be postponed until the time came for him to give up possession, but his brother would not agree to this, and the formality had taken place at Laverton Manor on the previous day. That same night the necklace had been stolen.

Mr. Parker had had a small party that evening, at which his brother had not been present, and after the guests had departed he had fallen asleep in a chair in his library, and his butler had been unable to arouse him. It was midnight when Mr. Parker retired to his room, locking his door on the inside. The first thing he saw on awakening in the morning was that his safe door was open.

He sprang out of bed and examined the safe, with the result that he discovered that the necklace, and an important document relating to some property upon which he held a mortgage, were missing. The only trace of the necklace was a portion of the clasp which seemed to have caught upon a piece of the ornamentation on the door of the safe, and had been broken.

Information was at once given to the police at the county town, about ten miles distant, and a detective was soon on the spot; but there was no clue to the robbers. The door was still locked on the inside on that morning, and the butler asserted that he was sure the safe was not open when he visited the room about ten o'clock on the previous evening. The windows had not been tampered with, and the detective as well as Mr. Parker was forced to the conclusion that the robbery had been committed between that time and midnight when the owner retired to rest.

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The servants were questioned, and all the rooms, including even that of Mr. Harry Parker's, were searched; but in the end the detectives were assured that the thieves had got clear away. Mr. Parker sent to London for assistance; but, after spending a week at Laverton and the neighbouring places, all that this member of the detective force could advance was an elaborate theory to the effect that the robber had entered while all the servants were busy in connection with the party, had secreted himself in the room, effecting his purpose after the butler's visit, and had then taken the last train to the county town, whence, on the following morning, he could easily travel to Harwich and cross to Holland with his booty.

The strange thing about the robbery was that Mr. William Parker did not seem very much concerned about the loss of the necklace, although it was pretty certain that Mr. Mellowes would make a claim for compensation. Mr. Parker seemed annoyed at the loss of the document and the idea of being robbed, rather than overwhelmed with anxiety at the loss of an ornament valued at twenty thousand pounds. In fact, the London detective had a secret notion that probably Mr. Parker knew where the heirloom had gone.

On the day after the departure of that officer, Mr. Parker was accosted by the superintendent of police as he was driving through Ipsham. After a moment's conversation, Mr. Parker drove on; but half an hour later he was closeted with the chief of the police and a young detective in a room at the police station.

"It amounts to this, Mr. Parker," said the superintendent. "We confess we were a little annoyed that you should send to London for assistance, and so practically take the matter out of our hands. A man can't do everything just because he comes from London, as you have seen for yourself. My nephew here," turning to the detective, "has a theory, and there won't be any harm, I think, in allowing him to work upon that for a week or so."

"What do you want to do?" asked Mr. Parker, ignoring the first portion of the officer's remarks.

"We think that there is something deeper in this than you imagine," resumed the superintendent, "and we should like to try this theory for the credit of the force. I don't care about explaining it just now, because we shall stand more chance of success if we keep quiet; but I should like you to engage my nephew as a footman for a little while."

"I don't want any extra servants."

"If you'll give me a chance, Mr. Parker," interrupted the young man eagerly, "I really believe that I can unravel this mystery and find the diamond necklace."

"You won't find the diamond necklace."

"I believe I shall, if you let me try." Parker cast a scrutinising glance at the young detective, and signified his assent to the proposition by a nod of the head and a laconic, "Very well."

When Parker returned to the Manor that afternoon he somewhat surprised his son and the servants by announcing that he had engaged a young fellow to attend more particularly to his own wants and to keeping the library in good order or anything else which he (Parker) might require him to do. "I am getting old now," he explained, "and this young fellow will be more like a valet."

John Game arrived the next morning and at once entered upon his duties. The other servants did not appear to think much of his intelligence; he was rather slow in his movements and the expression of his face was almost wooden. Still, if the master wanted him and was satisfied with him, they could say nothing. Mr. Harry smiled, shrugged his shoulders and held his tongue.

However, the new man soon worked his way into the good graces of the heir to the Manor. He had a fair amount of spare time and this he devoted to the service of Mr. Harry, making himself useful in various ways and sometimes accompanying him when he drove to a neighbouring house. Mr. Harry Parker was a welcome guest everywhere; he was a pleasant, agreeable fellow and quite an eligible young man in the eyes of parents who had marriageable daughters. The only fault that could be found with him, but this was not apparent to everyone, was that he could not be described as a strong-minded person.

Before Game had been in the house four days he was doing more for the son than for the father, but the old gentleman seemed pleased to be rid of him, while Harry Parker himself liked this attention.

In the meantime a letter had been received from Mr. Mellowes in connection with the missing necklace, asking what was to be done in the circumstances. To this letter the squire returned a brief answer, which ran: "You need have no concern about it. I shall be able to produce it at the proper time."

This reply was not seen by anyone at the Manor, or it would probably have caused much surprise there, as it did in the mind of the recipient.

Two days later Mr. Harry Parker had the trap got ready for the purpose of driving to Ruthing, five miles distant, on a visit to Mrs. Cathcart. This lady was a widow of striking appearance, and Harry Parker had visited her and attended her numerous parties very frequently during the last few weeks. The lady had visited the Manor on one or two occasions, when it had been noticed that Mr. Harry's attention had been very marked. His father had noticed it, and had thrown out a hint or two that his son's visits to Ruthing should not be so frequent. He admitted that the lady was decidedly attractive, but he did not feel any desire to have her for a daughter-in-law, not only because she was seven or eight years older than his son, but also because she was not the kind of woman he wished to be mistress of the Manor. But his hints had not been heeded, and the old gentleman was making up his mind to take some decisive step for the purpose of counteracting the woman's influence over his rather weak-minded son.

The new man prepared to accompany him. Harry Parker rather liked Game to go with him; it gave a better appearance to the turn-out, and he was pleased when Game presented himself ready for the journey. The squire noticed it all and smiled.

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when they returned, and Mr. Parker was struck by the worn appearance of his son's face.

"I hope to goodness," he muttered, "he has proposed and been rejected. It would be a blessing and save me a good deal of anxiety, although he would regard it in another light at first."

Mr. Parker retired to the library to spend a quiet hour or so in reading, while Harry went to his own room. The master of the Manor had scarcely settled himself in his arm-chair to peruse a chapter of the novel which he had leisurely selected from a shelf, when Game entered and closed the door leisurely behind him.

"I didn't ring," said Parker irritably.

"No, sir," returned the man, "but I've something to

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tell you. I think I am on the track." And drawing closer to his master he spoke in a low tone and his words led to conversation between the two which lasted several minutes and disturbed the squire's equanimity.

Harry, after wandering up and down his own room for nearly an hour, made his way to the library.

"Sit down, my boy," said his father cheerily. "Glad you've come. Haven't seen much of you to-day. Have a glass of wine; you don't look well. Hasn't the fair widow treated you properly to-day?"

Harry flushed as he took a seat near his father, and lifted the glass to his lips with unsteady hand.

"Mrs. Cathcart was as pleasant as she usually is," he returned a little awkwardly; "but I do not feel quite well this evening. Some passing indisposition, I suppose, father."

He drank the wine and remained silent. Watching him keenly, while his attention was apparently fixed elsewhere, his father noticed that the peculiar, dazed expression of Harry's eyes seemed to increase in intensity. Some few minutes passed without a word on either side. Then Harry began to fidget on his chair, and the old gentleman closed his eyes in thought.

Harry glanced at his father, and slowly his hand went to his own waistcoat-pocket, from which he drew a tiny packet.

Undoing one end, he leant forward and shook the contents—a small quantity of white powder—into the wine in his father's glass, again falling back in his chair with a stifled sigh.

A noise near the door aroused the two men. In order to look in that direction, Harry was obliged to turn his head. Hence he did not see his father take up his glass and swiftly pour the wine on the carpet.

"Oh, it's nothing," said Mr. Parker, leaning back in his chair with a yawn. "The butler or Game has stumbled against the door, I expect. Dear me, I feel dreadfully sleepy."

He yawned again and his head sank on his breast. Very soon his regular and heavy breathing indicated that he was asleep.

Quietly, stealthily, with an expression of intense excitement in his staring eyes, Harry arose from his seat, drew aside the old man's coat and felt in the breast pocket. He drew from it a bunch of keys which he transferred to his own pocket, and then hurried from the room. He had scarcely shut the door behind him when Mr. Parker jumped up and John Game emerged from behind the curtain drawn across the window near the door; the two men exchanged rapid glances and quietly but quickly followed Harry Parker.

Along the corridor and up the stairs he went, unconscious that he was followed, straight to his father's bedroom. He entered, closed the door, and fumbled for the key, but there was no key in the lock. A minute later the door was quietly opened and Mr. Parker peeped in, while Game strove to obtain a glimpse from behind his master. After the first glance Parker opened the door wider and walked in on tip-toe, closely followed by Game, the latter shutting the door. Concealed by the heavy *portiere* they watched the scene in the room.

Harry was on his knees in front of the safe, which he had opened, and was searching for something. He seemed unable to find the object of his search, for, with feverish haste, he turned over various things and looked in the drawers. With a heavy sigh he replaced the things he had disturbed, and shut and locked the safe, but left the keys hanging from the key-hole. The two watchers crept towards the hinge side of the door so that Harry might pass out without seeing them.

The young man passed his hand wearily over his forehead, and then walked unsteadily towards the door and went out, followed a moment later by his father and the new servant.

Down the stairs, along the corridor to a door at the back of the building, Harry Parker made his way silently and rapidly. Through this door he emerged into a small garden, a private portion of the grounds reserved for the use of his father and himself. The two men who were following him saw him walk to an old tree, a shattered relic of former times, at which he stopped. By the faint light they were able to perceive that he reached up to his full height and placed his hand in a hollow of the trunk, after pushing aside a parasite plant that covered the opening; when he turned from the tree towards the door he held in his hand two objects—a case, and a folded paper or large envelope.

"Let him go back, don't stop him," whispered Game, as Parker was about to step forward and confront his son. "It will be better to see where he puts them, and then take possession."

The old gentleman assented silently, and once more they followed Harry, and saw him place the articles in a drawer in his own room. Then, satisfied that he could get them when his son was asleep, the master of the Manor went back to the library with Game, after seeing that all outer doors were locked.

"What you said a while ago has proved correct," said Parker. "Now tell me the whole story, as you have worked it out in your mind."

"My suspicion as to the real solution of the robber mystery," began the detective, without any preliminary remark, "was aroused by what I had heard of Mrs. Cathcart and her hypnotic powers, the visits of your son to the house, and the facts that had come to my knowledge to show that she knew Mr. Mellowes. How did I find out the last? Well, a detective comes into possession of strange facts, and I have seen a little service, although I am a young man. Be satisfied that I do know.

"I know that Mr. Mellowes has involved himself in risky speculations, and that he is not so scrupulous as he ought to be. Mrs. Cathcart is mixed up with him in those speculations, and is in about as bad a position, financially, as he is. In plain language, they had got to find a large sum of money somewhere within weeks.

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"I take it that they concocted a scheme for getting the necklace while it was in the house, they believing, no doubt, that you usually deposited it with your bankers. Mrs. Cathcart is a very attractive woman, and so far as you know was not connected with your relative. She was therefore the best person to carry out the scheme, both on that account and by reason of her power of mesmerism. It was not difficult for her to rent the furnished house at Ruthing a few weeks before the date of your brother's visit and within that short period to make herself a prominent figure in the society of this part of the county.

"She soon became acquainted with your son and used her power to gain information of the Manor and the habits of its master. When the proper time arrived she used her dread powers of hypnotism, and suggested to your son that at an appropriate time he should drug you—she giving him the powder—and then take possession of your keys, extract the necklace from the safe and hide it in some safe place."

"But why did she allow it to remain in the hiding-place?" queried Mr. Parker.

"Probably because she thought it best to let it remain there while the detectives were about, or until it should be thought that all chance of recovery was gone. I don't think she suggested where he should hide it, but that he should place it where he thought it safest.

"The letter which, you tell me, you sent to your brother evidently made them suppose that you had discovered it, so Mrs. Cathcart invited Mr. Harry to-day in order to complete the execution of the scheme, whatever the result—success or failure.

"Mrs. Cathcart has been watched by others and information conveyed to me, that is why I determined to go with Mr. Harry this morning. I got near enough to them to get an idea of her plans, and I saw her hand him the powder. Then the whole thing seemed to cross my mind, and when we came back I asked you to fall in with my little scheme. They apparently thought that you had the necklace again in your safe, so Mrs. Cathcart suggested that he should look for it there, and if he did not find it he was to search for it in the hiding-place.

"If he did not find the case, there was an end of their scheme; if he found it he was to keep it until she arrived to-morrow morning, when she would find an opportunity of taking it from him. That is my story, and when she comes to pay you a visit to-morrow—as she has arranged it with Mr. Harry—you will have an opportunity, Mr. Parker, of confronting her with the details of her own plot. I have no doubt that you will find I am correct."

Mr. Parker smiled. "I will take the opportunity," he said, "but I really do not like to disappoint them about the necklace, and I have a good mind to present it to her and my esteemed brother with my compliments. Of course, had they got hold of the diamond necklace and then extracted some compensation from me, that would have set them up again."

"I don't understand what you mean when you talk of giving the necklace to them," said Game with a puzzled air.

"I will explain that in a minute," replied Parker "But, tell me, do you say that my son did not know what he was about while he was under the influence?"

"Yes," replied Game, "I do mean that. You have not studied, as I have, the question of hypnotism."

"I am glad of that," said Parker with a sigh of relief. "And I think I can upset that lady's power over my son in the future. Now for the necklace. Three years ago a *bonâ-fide* attempt was made to steal it on the evening of the day I had shown it to my brother, so I hit upon a little plan which he never saw through. I had a paste affair made and kept it in my safe, while the real one was lodged with my banker, who has kept his mouth shut all this time at my request. My brother has looked at the paste necklace on three occasions and thought it was genuine. Now, why Harry took the mortgage, is not clear, but perhaps that was unconscious."

The next day when Mrs. Cathcart called there was a scene in the library which was decidedly edifying. At the conclusion, as she rose to depart Mr. Parker offered her the necklace, but she did not take it.

Parker used his knowledge of the plot in order to force his brother to forego his claim to the heirloom, but as some compensation to the daughter for the loss of the valuable ornament, and in order to give his brother another chance, he made his niece a present of a cheque for half the value of the diamond necklace.

Game was satisfied that he had done credit to the county police and to himself, and there is good reason to suppose that he will make his mark in the world in due course.

Geo. Day.

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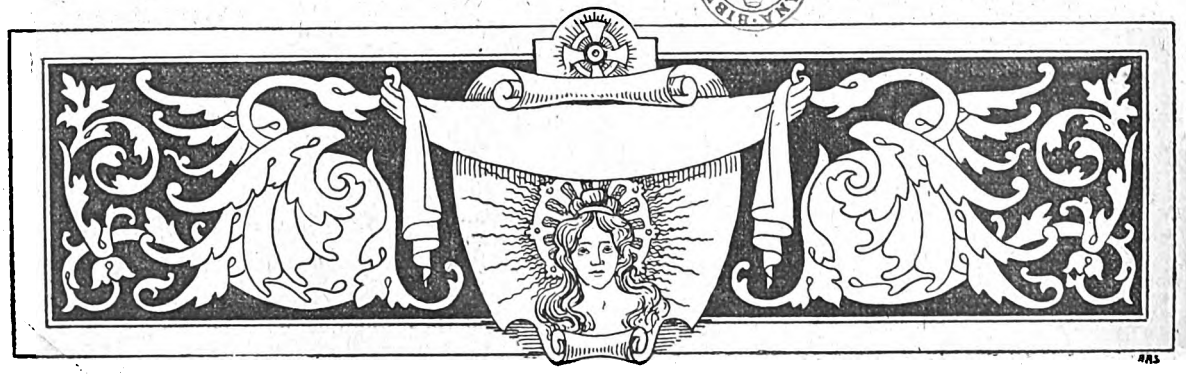

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LAST DAY—APRIL 17th.

TO win **One Thousand Pounds,** all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtain this copy of *S. S.*, to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for bookstall boys, and the £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

The addresses of the five witnesses must be written in full. If, however, they are all of the same town, it will be sufficient if the sentence, "All of Bradford, or Liverpool, or Glasgow," as the case may be, is written on the margin

It is necessary for each coupon sent in by one competitor to bear five signatures, but the same five people may sign as many coupons as they like. It is not necessary for each competitor to find a fresh set of witnesses for each coupon. Competitors may sign for one another.

There is no objection to rubber stamps being used in place of signatures.

Coupons from Pearson's Weekly, Home Notes, M. A. P., Pastimes, Sunday Reader, Big Budget, and Pick-Me-Up are all available in this competition.

You may keep all the coupons and send them in to reach here by the closing day if you wish.

The coupons belonging to each separate competitor must be inclosed in one envelope or parcel. Two or three competitors may not send in together.

The prize will be awarded to the competitor whose two figures are correct or most nearly correct. For example, if the correct figures are 7,000 and 3,000 respectively, the competitor whose forecasts are 6,999 and 2,999 will take precedence over the competitor whose forecasts are, say, 7,000 and 2,997 respectively.

All correspondence regarding this competition must be addressed to The Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and NOT marked BIRTHS. Only envelopes containing coupons should be marked in this way.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....

2. .....

3. .....

4. .....

5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "PASTIMES," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," and "M. A. P."

THIRD INSTALMENT.

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey. Being mounted on a superior horse the refugee easily shakes off his wretched companions, and at a later period assists two ladies in escaping from a band of thieves. Geoffrey is hospitably entertained by a Welsh farmer, and on resuming his journey he encounters a handsomely dressed Welshman. The latter upbraids the English, and they fight with swords. At a critical moment the duel is stopped by the young girl whom Geoffrey had assisted, and who turns out to be no other than his own cousin. The refugee is welcomed by his uncle.

CHAPTER VI. (*Continued.*)

"AND you think that his movement is directed against you?" I asked.

"I know it," said Sir Arthur with decision. "These people, Geoffrey, are hot of temper, vindictive and treacherous to a degree. They never forgive and never forget. They will go through fire and water to reach it, and to wait for it merely inflames them; they will make it the deeper and bloodier when they get it."

"Do you expect them to attack this house?" I asked.

"It would not surprise me, indeed," said Sir Arthur gloomily.

"But what can they do with pikes against such a strong place as this?" said I. "A dozen stout fellows could hold this house against a regiment unprovided with cannon."

"Ay, ay," said my uncle; "but a regiment comes on with drum and trumpet, and you know where to look for them. But these fellows come on you as the mist glides over the hill."

He fell silent, tapping with his foot upon the floor, and looking into the fire. A question had been in my mind for some time, and I put it.

"Why," said I, "was Master Vaughan so eager to fight with me when he found I was an Englishman?"

"Partly," replied my uncle, "because he is a hot-headed fool, and partly because he has reason. His father joined the King's army a little before Naseby fight, and either was promised, or believed he was promised, a regiment. However, a gentleman from Worcestershire obtained the command, and the elder Vaughan considered himself an injured party. He made no secret of his opinion, and over their wine he and his successful rival came to high words. A meeting was the result and the Welshman was killed before half-a-dozen passes had been exchanged. He was very poor—we are all poor—and, on his death, his creditors took nearly the whole of his estate. He had kindly made me guardian of his children, and I have given them the run of Nant y Bryn."

"Are they close relations?" I asked.

"Close," laughed Sir Arthur. "They wouldn't be reckoned relations at all according to English notions. They are of the same name, and I suppose of the same family. There is a tree somewhere worked out with painful diligence by my grandfather, and showing how we stand related, but I hardly know where to look for it."

He dismissed the subject with a wave of his hand, and continued to stare into the fire. The door now opened, and a domestic announced that the midday meal was ready. My uncle bustled to put away the gold in a secret hiding place, constructed in the thickness of the wall, and covered with a panel which worked with a spring, and then we went to a room on the other side of the wide hall.

This apartment was also large and ill-lighted, so that the flames of the fire overpowered the faint daylight in the duskier corners and shone in ruddy reflections on the dark, oaken wainscot. The brother and sister were standing before the hearth awaiting our arrival, and we sat down at once.

Upon the conclusion of the meal my uncle, with scant

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ceremony, drew Owain Vaughan to the further part of the room, and began to converse with him in low tones. The great length of the apartment cut us into two distinct parties, and I glanced across the table to Miss Vaughan, who sat opposite to me. I found her eyes fixed full upon me, and I smiled.

"It is possible," said I, "that your thoughts are the same as mine. Was it not odd the manner in which we criss-crossed for those two days?"

"I was thinking of the same thing," she said, smiling also, "though, after all, there is much in the fact that we were making for the same point."

"And Siani?" said I. "Did she come to any further mishap with no knife to defend her?"

"We reached home quite safely," said Miss Vaughan.

Her eyes expressed an inquiry which I hastened to answer, and I related to her the fright of the fellows I turned back to meet, and my wanderings among the hills.

"I felt sure of it," she said. "We know the road so well that we can scarcely conceive of the difficulties it presents to a stranger. I trusted, at any rate, it was nothing worse."

She was silent for a moment. Then she said in a low voice, her colour rising slightly:

"It must seem very strange to you—the occurrence of this morning; but I did not recognise you at all. I saw nothing but Owain. He was being driven back before you and I thought him in great danger. I have never seen him look like that in my life."

"And now, believe me, Miss Vaughan," said I earnestly, "he was in no danger at all from me. My sole object was to disarm him. I could not understand then why he thrust a quarrel upon me merely because I was English. My uncle has spoken of it, and I understand now."

At this moment Owain returned towards us, and Sir Arthur went out of the room. Miss Vaughan also retired, and Owain and I stood near the fire to talk.

"My uncle," said I, "seems afraid that these red fellows will attack this house."

"It is likely enough," said my companion.

"But to what purpose?" I continued. "A set of ragged thieves such as they are could make no entrance."

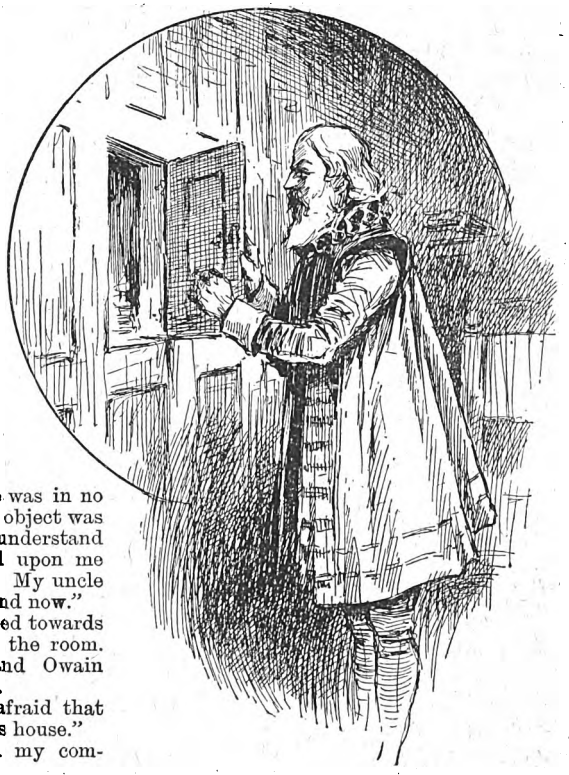
"We should give them as hot a reception as we could," replied he, "for if they did win entrance they would make clean work of it."

"This leader—this Ieuan," said I, "has he any resentment against any one besides Sir Arthur?"

"I do not think so," said Owain. "I believe his feelings towards, say, myself, who have been familiar with him from boyhood, are friendly, but he is a man of that turn of mind which would give Nant y Bryn to the flames and everybody within it so that his enemy were included in the destruction."

"My uncle represents him as a man extremely vindictive," I said, "and declares that his grievances are merely fanciful."

I thought that his hint would cause Owain to speak on the differences which lay between Sir Arthur and Ieuan Gwyllt, but it had the opposite effect. Vaughan looked into the fire in silence, drawing his moustache through his fingers, and I knew then that had Sir Arthur not been my uncle I might have heard another story.



My uncle put away the gold in a secret hiding-place.

CHAPTER VII.

An Errand of Mercy.

On the third day after my arrival at Nant y Bryn, at about eleven o'clock of the morning I was standing at one of the windows of my uncle's room. The prospect was dreary in the extreme. A thick, dark mist had settled on the hills and an old oak tree, forty yards away, was a faint, ghost-like shadow in the dull grey vapour. The rain fell heavily in straight, unbroken lines, and the trickling thread of rivulet which passed the house, had swelled to a furious yellow flood, whose deep, hollow note filled the air. So dark was the day that the room behind me was filled with the light of fire and candle as if the night had fallen. I turned my head and found my uncle peering at me over the top of the book he held in his hand. He was regarding me so intently, and yet in a kind of abstraction, that for a moment he seemed scarcely aware that our eyes were meeting.

I thought he was about to speak but he lowered his glance to the page before him and remained silent.

He was sitting near the fire, a candle at his elbow, and his usual medley of volumes heaped around him. He had inherited my grandfather's passion for study and spent the greater part of his time in reading.

I continued to gaze upon him, half idly, half wondering why he was staring so hard at me, and in a moment I found his eyes rising again. This time I certainly thought he had something to say, but no, he looked down again when he had found that I was still regarding him. His thin, delicate face shone pink in the firelight, his long white hair was like silver, his bright, dark eye ran from line to line down his book, and still I stared, and still wondered what it was in my uncle's face which so repelled me though I could not fix upon a malignant expression in any feature. All of a sudden he burst out:

"I wish to Heaven, nephew," he cried, peevishly, "that you had made your way here on a quieter animal."

"Whitesock, sir," said I, "a sweeter-tempered creature was never foaled. 'Tis true she will allow no one on her back but myself. The fellow should have left her alone."

"All very fine," cried my uncle, "but to have a man with a shoulder badly put out, just at the time when we need every pair of hands, and because he wanted no more than to try the paces of the mare, is too bad. How do we know but that that rogue Ieuan and his fellow rogues may be down on us any day or night."

"I am sorry," I returned, "for the weakening of the garrison to that extent, but surely against such ill-provided assailants we are ample in number to make the place good."

"And she will absolutely allow no one but him to molest her," said Sir Arthur, staring into the fire, and paying no attention to my last remarks. His tone was odd, for it was one of pure chagrin, and I could not make out what he meant.

"No one, at all," said I.

He started, and looked up, with a quick, uneasy smile.

"I was thinking aloud, nephew," he replied. "I had it in mind how in places where the need arises they put the old and infirm in as secure a place as possible while the young and nimble fight it out. Truly, a man with your Whitesock under him could regard all chances of fortune with an easy mind. He could fight, or he could fly, just as he listed."

"Why these gloomy thoughts, sir?" said I. "Your fortunes do not incline to such evil case, so far as anyone can see. I would gladly—"

Sir Arthur held up his hand and I fell silent.

He listened for a moment, then said:

"Who is galloping at so fearful a pace down the hill road?"

I could hear nothing, for the roar of the river drowned all other sounds for me. To my uncle it was so familiar that he dismissed it, and caught other noises as though the thunder of the water was not present. He went across to one of the windows, and we both stared eagerly through the mist. In another moment a flying mass came into sight. It gathered form and outline at every yard, and we saw a man holding two children before him dash up to the house.

"It is Hugh Fron," cried Sir Arthur, and ran to the main entrance. I followed him hastily, and helped to draw the huge bolts. As we did so, we heard the man spring down on the stones before the door, and in an instant heavy knockings resounded through the house. I flung the door back, and the man rushed in. He had a squalling child under each arm and his face was white, and terror striken, and streaming with sweat. In an instant, the wide hall was full of people. Owain and Enid came to the spot where Sir Arthur was questioning the new-comer and the servants crowded the lower end to hear the news. The man told his story in gasps but I was none the wiser until I began to distinguish an often repeated sound, and recognised "Y Gwylliaid Cochion." In the very midst of the fellow's story Enid Vaughan struck in with a sharp inquiry. The man faltered, hung his head, and was loth to reply. When he did she seemed about to speak warmly when Sir Arthur stepped towards her.

"Pray, be silent, Enid," said he, in English. "Let us have the whole of his story, then you can see about the woman." With a strong effort Miss Vaughan controlled herself and stood, with heightened colour and scornful eye, while my uncle put question after question.

"You will, of course, take some steps in the matter at once, Sir Arthur," said she to my uncle at the first pause.

"This fellow's place," whispered Owain Vaughan in my ear, "has been attacked by these red-headed rogues. So far as I can make out the main idea was food and plunder. But he fled without delay, leaving his wife ill in bed."

"And the unfortunate woman was left there alone?" said I.

"So it seems," replied Owain. "But, if no one stirs, it is certain that my sister will be on the road within a few minutes."

I turned my eyes on my uncle to see what answer he would make to the young lady's appeal. He said nothing to her for the moment but shouted an angry command to the listening crowd at the lower end of the hall, and it melted away. Owain spoke up.

"Would it not be as well, sir, for a few men to get to horse and ride as far as Fron to see into this story and take some measures about the woman?"

"Yes, Owain, that is what must be done, at once," said his sister.

"And what men will you muster to ride upon this errand?" asked my uncle, suddenly.

"A few of the men about the house is best," replied Owain.

"Not a man of mine stirs an inch," said my uncle, fixing a hard eye upon the young people in turn. "'Tis mere folly. In such weather as this an enemy could mark you down at half-a-dozen yards and you none the wiser."

"Ay," said Owain, "but there is another side to it. You could pass within a dozen yards of an enemy and be none the wiser."

"Turn the thing how you like," said Sir Arthur, "you shall not have a man. I will weaken my strength for no such hare-brained devices.

"There is no need of it," said I, "if Miss Vaughan is resolved to see how this woman is faring, I shall only be too proud if she will allow me to join her brother in accompanying her."

She turned and thanked me with a smile and Owain clapped me on the shoulder.

"You have proposed the best plan imaginable," said he. "We will carry it out at once."

My uncle muttered something savagely, but we took no further notice of him, and within ten minutes we were trotting away into the mist. Luckily, the rain had stopped, and we travelled the more comfortably for that. Enid Vaughan was riding her nimble, quick-stepping pony, and Owain a strong, grey horse. We chatted cheerfully in low voices as we rode, for the weather had been very bad for the last two days, and no one had been out, so that our present jaunt seemed a very holiday trip. The easy motion of the horses over the turf, the fresh, damp wind blowing in one's face, the spice of danger which lay concealed among the hills, stirred the blood and gave a keen zest to the adventure.

"It seems rather a strange thing," said I, "for the man to fly and leave his wife."

"I never thought much of him," remarked Owain. "It fits in well enough with other things he has done."

"There is one point quite certain," said Enid; "and that is, she would never have left him under like circumstances. She is Siani's sister, and truer, more faithful blood you could never find."

"I am sure of that," I replied, and smiled to myself, as I always did when I thought of the Egyptian and her disfigurement.

The place was about seven miles from Nant y Bryn, but much of the way was very bad underfoot, either stony or soft and we were a full hour and a half reaching it.

When the house came in sight I went forward, being the best mounted, to look over the ground. Everything was deserted and silent. I waved my hand and the others rode rapidly on. Enid sprang down at once and ran into the house. We listened intently and upon hearing a cry of pleasure from the abandoned woman, both of us gave a deep breath of relief and smiled upon each other.

"Let us lead the horses inside," said Owain. "The place lies naked to the hills all round and if the mist should lift we might be spied on from a dozen points."

We did so, and found that the interior of the place presented a scene of the utmost disorder. The simple furniture had been flung hither and thither, the table turned upside down, the dresser wrenched away from the wall, meal and milk all spilt and trodden into the mud of the floor, and a pool of blood, in the midst of which a strong, shaggy dog lay dead.

"Good boy!" said Owain, patting the stiffened body of the faithful cur and went on to his sister while I remained near the door to keep watch.

The sick woman lay in a small recess partitioned off at the further end of the kitchen and I soon learned that she had suffered nothing from the visit of the robbers save dreadful apprehension. They had not so much as visited the nook where she lay but contented themselves with ransacking the place for food and weapons. The knowledge

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that her children were in safety calmed her and the presence of the young lady gave her such reassurance that in a short time Enid came to tell us that she had fallen asleep.

"What can we do with her?" said Owain.

"Will not her husband and children come back?" said I.

"I don't think he will, at present," returned Owain "and to speak frankly, I believe Sir Arthur will encourage him to remain."

"For what purpose?" I asked. "Surely there are enough people now about Monty Bryn, and if there were not, such a fellow as that would be of no service."

"It is becoming a craze with Sir Arthur to cram the house at night with men from the farms near at hand," replied Owain. "Since my sister's return with the story of her adventures the number quartered under the roof has risen to more than double the usual count."

"Owain," said his sister who had been deep in thought while we were speaking; "we must carry her to Penlan."

"How?" he asked.

"We must wrap her up warmly, and put her on the sled."

"You are right, Enid," he replied, after a little pause. "It is smooth grass to Penlan. But had I not better ride over first to see how matters stand there?"

"It would be best," she said; "nor would it take you long."

"I will go at once," he returned, "you will be quite safe here with Master Heathcote," and he led out his horse. In another moment we heard him galloping away and Enid turned to me to explain. Penlan, it appeared, was a farmhouse about two miles away, and one not likely to be attacked since the owner had four strong sons, and the family was noted for its courage and resolution. If everything was right there it would be easy to convey the sick woman where she would be in good hands.

The woman now gave a sharp cry and Miss Vaughan hastened to her, but returned in a moment.

"She is not awake," she said, "her fear is still working in her mind and she is crying out in her sleep."

"Poor creature," said I, "she has been through a dreadful ordeal."

"Yes," said my companion. "I had no great opinion of Hugh but certainly I did not think he was so bad as this."

At this moment a soft nose slipped over my shoulder and Whitesock put her head down to my breast and held it there tightly. She was trembling so that she shook me.

"Oh, yes," said I, caressing her. "It is blood. She has a great disgust of blood."

In less than an hour Owain returned accompanied by the farmer of Perlan and his wife. A sled was brought out, for of wheeled vehicles there was none in that country a couple of mountain ponies harnessed to it, and then the sick woman was well wrapped up and laid upon it. The sled ran easily over the turf but, of necessity, the journey to Penlan was a slow one, and when we started from the solitary farmhouse to ride back to Nant y Bryn the short February day was closing in.

He had a squalling child under each arm and his face was white.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Ride Through the Cwm.

We did not return by Fron but struck straight across the hills, and, ere long, the path ran into the mouth, and along the bottom of a deep *cwm*. The sides were steep and rocky to a degree, but from side to side of the V-shaped trough, stretched a strip of turf, broad enough for us to ride abreast and smooth as a shaven lawn.

"Surely we are safe from observation in this shelter," said I, glancing right and left at the towering walls running up and losing themselves in the mist. "It is like riding through a cavern."

"We call it *Cwm Cul*," remarked Owain, "that is, Narrow Valley, and the sides are impassable for horses every inch of the way."

As he spoke a hollow bark rang through the mist above our heads.

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The interior of the place presented a scene of the utmost disorder.

"An old dog-fox that," said I.

It was answered from the other side.

"Foxes," said Owain, glancing uneasily around him in the thickening dusk; "I have never started foxes about here. Let us ride faster."

Enid Vaughan touched her pony and it bounded forward at full speed, and we galloped beside her. The hollow barking rang out again. By the sound, the foxes were still ahead of us above, and at this Owain cried in a low voice, "Ride your fastest."

"What do you fear?" I asked, half expecting his answer.

"Y Gwylliaid Cochion," said he.

Suddenly a thick wreath of mist before us folded itself into a close cloud and rolled upon one side like a curtain drawn back. We glanced eagerly up. A bunch of figures, faint against the darkening sky, and far above us, were running like deer along the upper edge of the *cwm*. We knew by the answering notes that they had companions upon the other side, and we were shut in by a mile of rocky walls.

"But surely we shall reach the mouth first," I cried, "they are on foot."

"Hope so," returned Owain, but his tone was doubtful.

"And if not," I pursued, "they can but block the mouth, and we shall ride them down."

"They will give us no chance," said Owain. "At thirty yards distance, they will throw their pikes so as to strike their enemy wherever they please."

"Ride on, Master Heathcote," broke in Enid, eagerly. "It is we who have brought you into this danger, and it is easy for you to escape."

"You are right, sister," said Owain. "Come, Master Heathcote, your mare is but cantering, while we are doing our utmost. Ride on, we beg of you."

"Willingly," said I, "if you think I can hold the mouth until you arrive."

"'Tis impossible," said Owain. "You cannot conceive of their cunning and activity. If you stood, you would be ringed round, and pierced on a dozen sides."

"Then I will stay," said I, and I loosened my sword and looked over my pistols as I rode, and Owain did the same.

"Enid," said he, quickly, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him. "You must mount and ride with me. Under the double weight, my horse would outstrip your pony's fastest, and so we should gain something."

"By that reasoninging," said I, "Whitesock ought to carry the double weight, and we should gain again, and so escape. Will you not both mount her and let me ride the grey horse?"

"Do you think she would permit it?" asked Owain.

"I hope so," was my answer. "It is worth the trial."

I sprang down and the exchange was made in a moment. Enid Vaughan placed her foot in her brother's hand and swung herself lightly to the front of the saddle, Owain bounded up behind her and I seized the mane of the grey horse. But even as I put my foot into the stirrup, I paused fearfully as time pressed us, and stood irresolute. The mare had permitted them to mount like a lamb so long as I stood at her head, but now her legs were gathering under her in a threatening fashion, her shoulders were working, her red eye was rolling in my direction, and I knew that the sight of me on the grey horse would drive her into a jealous fury which no rider could quell. Thoroughly familiar with the ways of horses, there was no need for the other two to ask why I hung with a foot in the stirrup.

"It is of no use," cried Owain, leaping down, "I could never hold her with Enid before me. Her body plays with the strength of tempered steel. Up with you, Master Heathcote, and give me my horse again."

I sprang for my own saddle, threw one arm round Enid Vaughan, touched Whitesock lightly with my heel—her shining flanks know nothing of the spur—and she skimmed down the valley at a speed which left Owain far behind.

At first Enid Vaughan sat steadily up, balancing herself lightly to the mare's stride, with one hand resting upon my arm, but she had never before in her life been carried through the air at so prodigious a pace and presently I held her tighter, for I saw her head swim and her eyes half close. I reined Whitesock in a little, partly to give my companion an opportunity to throw off the giddiness with which the swiftness of the mare had oppressed her, partly to give Owain a chance to come level with us. I did not turn my head, but in an instant I heard his powerful steed thundering up behind, and his voice shouting:

"Do not draw rein for me. Ride, ride! You at least can make yourselves safe. The very wind could not catch you."

I laughed gaily, and held Whitesock at an easy gallop for a moment until he came alongside.

"What an action!" he said. "It is the keenest pleasure to see her four legs move."

I thought to myself that the movements of the Gwylliard Cochion were more to us at the moment than Whitesock's beautiful running, but Owain's pride was such that though he was straining every nerve to escape for the sake of his sister, yet he disdained the idea of allowing the fear of them to fill his whole mind and speech.

His grey horse was galloping furiously, cutting out great sods from the soft turf and flinging them in a shower behind him, while Owain sat close down to the saddle handling him in such fashion as to get every inch of advantage.

"Surely we are coming towards the mouth of the cwm?" said I.

"It is hidden by a sharp turn only a little distance ahead of us," replied Owain.

"Be easy Enid. We shall come clear now I feel sure. I know very well that you are taking all the blame upon yourself." She turned her head and smiled. Her lustrous eyes were full of courage, and full also of a fear which was not for herself. He smiled gaily back, and I would not have changed the companionship of those two brave souls for any situation the world could offer.

The barking as of a fox had been left far behind. As soon as we burst out to our gallop it had been changed for notes of far other import, a long, wailing cry, very shrill and followed by a faint far off echo as if it had been repeated at a great distance.

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Of a sudden we galloped out of the mist and saw before us the steep sides and narrow mouth of the cwm clear against a saffron sky. We were riding westwards and though the sun was down the sky was still filled with the afterglow.

The wonderful purity and clearness of the mountain air after rain caused every object which broke into the sky line to stand out with an inky blackness upon the shining background.

"All's clear ahead," cried I.

"That is to say we see nothing," returned Owain cautiously. But in a moment we saw our enemies. Four or five running figures appeared on the brow of the right hand cliff, darted down the slope, and paused.

"They are stopping," said I. "We shall win the race easily."

"Faster, ride faster, gallop before me," cried Owain quickly. "The mouth of the cwm narrows so that we must go in single file. On! on! or it will be blocked against us!"

I gave Whitesock her head as I perceived what the Red Men of the Dusk were doing. A great boulder lay tilted above the mouth of the glen as if a finger's touch would topple it over, and the figures above were wrestling with it, and, as I looked, I saw it rock and sway against the sky. Then I gave a cry of joy for the mouth of the narrow valley, set between two portals of rock, appeared close before us. Owain echoed my cry with a louder and shriller one.

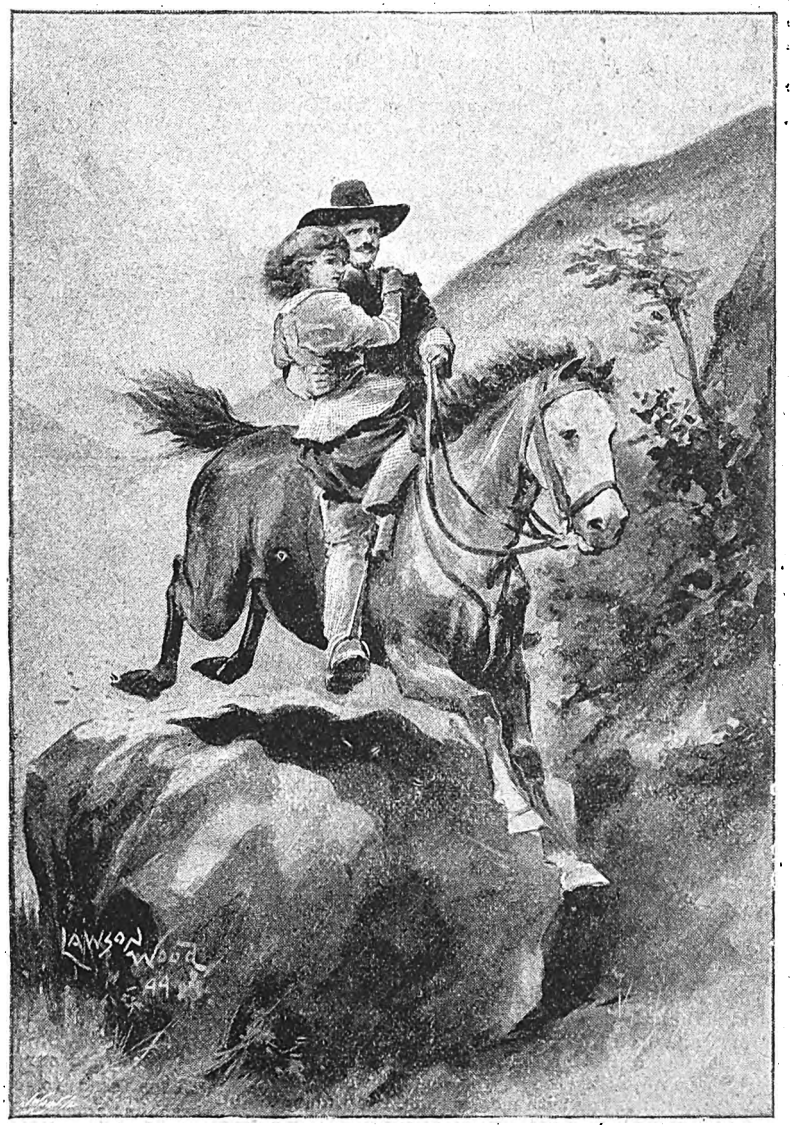
"Draw rein!" he screamed, "Hold! Hold!" Instinctively I obeyed him and Whitesock fell back upon her haunches. Nothing but her ready obedience saved us. Looking up, my throat became dry with terror at the fate which seemed to hang over us. With dull, horrible thuds, the great boulder was leaping down the steep, grassy slope. As it came it twirled and spun, glancing a little on one side or the other as it pitched on the faces set at various angles. Terrific as was its speed, it seemed to me an endless time in falling. Its bounds and twistings gave it another character from that of a rude, insensate block of stone. It seemed a great, formless monster, leaping down upon us and calculating every ricochet to include us in its path.

A group of graceful young mountain ashes stood in its way; it sprang upon them and blotted them from the mountain side. Unused to judging such things, its course seemed to me to be laid directly for us, and only Owain's swift command to stand still kept me chained to the spot. With a crash that shook the earth under our feet, the mighty rock leaped into the mouth of the glen not a dozen yards before us, made one clumsy bound up the further bank, then dropped heavily back, blocking the path from side to side.

"We are shut in!" cried Owain.

"Shut in!" I laughed, and begged Miss Vaughan to cling firmly to me. I pricked Whitesock up and sent her at the great sprawling stone. She took half-a-dozen tremendous strides, threw her ears forward, rose to the leap and cleared the boulder without a touch, flying through the air as smoothly, and dropping on her feet as lightly and easily as though she knew that we in the saddle needed all that she could do to help us. I turned my head and saw Owain dismounted, and scrambling over after us. He kicked off his riding boots, and began to run like a deer. Our enemies were running, too, and, glancing up the hill, I saw one of them already near enough to poise a spear. I touched Whitesock and away she darted just in time as the spear whizzed at my back.

Owain seized a stirrup leather and with that assistance ran faster still. He was in his stockings but the grass was like velvet. I drew a pistol and fired a shot almost at



Rose to the leap and cleared the boulder without a touch.

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random. It served, however, to check the pursuit and soon we were travelling over a wide down, where even in the failing light we could not easily be approached.

"You have left your horse," I said.

"Yes," replied Owain. "He runs well but is no jumper, I saw there was nothing else for it after the swallow fashion your mare went over. But what is that? Someone is riding after us!"

He reached up to my nearest holster and took a pistol, then turned, and peered through the dusk.

I laid my hand on my sword, for the other pistol was empty, but Owain began to laugh.

"I am in luck," said he; "for I have no boots and within five minutes we shall be on the stones."

As he spoke, up galloped Enid's pony, neighing for joy to see its friends once more.

"However could it pass that block, when the tall horse refused the leap?" I asked.

"Scramble over like a cat," said Owain, leaping into the saddle; "these are the cleverest little creatures that run on four legs."

We trotted rapidly on again, and within half an hour were safely back at Plas Nant.

My uncle came out to meet us, and, churlish as he had been at our setting off, begged eagerly for our story. This he asked of me, and, being his guest, I could scarce refuse him.

He listened with a dilated eye, nervously closing and unclosing his hands, and I had not finished my tale when there came a great knocking at the gate. The fellow on guard sprang to reconnoitre through a Judas, but saw nothing except a riderless horse. My uncle was called, and I went with him, and the horse, upon being brought into the courtyard, was found to be Owain's nag. A torch was brought out, and I then observed a piece of slatey shale tied to its rein by a dried rush, and I took hold of it. Upon it was scratched in rude letters "I. G.," and I passed it to my uncle.

"The horse has not found its way back of itself, that is clear," said I.

Sir Arthur stared at the rudely-formed letters with all his eyes.

"And does he so, indeed?" he said, "and does he so?"

He bit his lip and looked again at the scrap of shale.

"Nephew," he went on, "do you not see the rogue's drift? He is wishful to curry favour with Owain against me. Ay, that is his idea."

"A very foolish one, then," I replied. "And in adopting such a fancy you do not compliment Master Vaughan. I am certain he would be incapable of being influenced in such fashion."

"Why the return of the horse?" called out my uncle, beating his hand upon the saddle.

"I should say," I replied, "that this Ieuan was not among the band that pursued us, that he came upon the scene within a little while, and, having no feeling of enmity against Master Vaughan, sent him his horse back."

"Why there you grant me everything!" cried out Sir Arthur, beating the saddle more vehemently, "everything you pick me out, all of you, you set me up as a mark for this band, you as good as say that I, and I alone, am the object of their resentment. And therefore, all others are to be drawn from me, to desert me, to leave me to their mercy, the mercy of a pack of wolves."

To this outcry silence seemed to me the best answer and I said nothing.

"My bane upon your foolish plotting!" he burst out, his eyes burning with venomous contempt and fury. "My hearty bane upon it. It is I who should be seeking refuge with you, and not you with me. A bane, I say, upon bungling fools who know not when to rest content in peace and safety."

(To be continued.)

Yeast: "Why is it that a loafer is like a postage-stamp?"

Crimsonbeak: "Well, I suppose it is because he seems to be stuck on the corner."

Miles: "Hello, Giles. Is it a fact that you have recently married?"

Giles: "I guess so. Facts, you know, are stubborn things."

"Why have you abandoned the typewriter?" asked the editor of the literary lady.

"Simply because I can't do any good work without chewing at the end of a lead pencil."

Maud: "When I get engaged I don't intend to have any mystery about it."

Marie: "I don't see how you can help it, dear. Every one will regard it as a mystery."

Tenor: "At the first concert in which I sang four ladies were removed from the hall in a fainting condition."

Friend: "Ah! Indeed? But you must remember your voice has improved since then!"

"Do you ever get the last word in an argument with your wife?"

"Always."

"That is surprising."

"Not at all. I get it from her."

Each spring he starts his pilgrimage
From winter's long sojourn,
And like the man upon the stage,
He does his little turn.

Our Boat Race Competition.

The official result of the boat race, as given by Mr. F. Fenner, the distance judge, was:

Winner: CAMBRIDGE.

Distance won by: 3½ lengths.

Time: 21min. 4sec.

No fewer than 199 of the competitors gave the winner, and the *actual* distance won by, but the majority of them expected the Light Blues to cover the course in less time than that officially returned. One gentleman, however, gave the time within one second, his coupon reading 21min. 3sec., and to him—

Mr. W. E. JONES,

53 Brixton Road, Stratford, E.—

is awarded our prize of £5. A cheque of £1 has also been sent to each of the witnesses to his coupon. Their names and addresses are: Mr. B. Wilcox, 55 Mansfield Road, Ilford; Mr. A. Everett, 17 Garney Road, Stratford.

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Uncalled-for Jealousy.

AN ELDERLY ADMIRER.

"THEN I propose," said Hugh Waterson doggedly, "that we say 'good-bye.'"

He turned his face away from her as he spoke, as though fearful that the sight of her eyes might not tend to stiffen his resolution.

"I have pleasure," remarked Miss Stanhope, with a little touch of obstinacy in her voice, "in seconding that resolution."

He turned and walked along the passage leading to the hall of the Museum. As soon as he had gone out of the swing doors, Ethel Stanhope ran and looked through the glass windows across the gravelled yard. Pigeons were organising expeditions in search of seed; but she did not look at the pigeons. The tall spare youth whom she watched walked briskly down towards the gateway, his face set determinedly to Great Russell Street.

"If Hugh turns his head," she said to herself, "I'll wave my handkerchief and then he will come back."

Mr. Waterson's head did not turn. This was the more annoying to Miss Stanhope, as the small row was one in which Miss Stanhope had felt herself so obviously in the wrong that it had been of the first importance that she should decline to give way.

"Bother!" said Ethel Stanhope.

She returned to the big round Reading-Room and took her books back to the counter. Then she walked out listlessly and up to the First Egyptian Room.

"I'll have a look at my friend Amen-aru," she said, patting her hair thoughtfully. "*He* won't quarrel and say cross things. *He*, at any rate, is always quiet and well-behaved. I don't suppose he has lost his temper for years."

Amen-aru lay in the First Egyptian Room in his glass case, with his bound-up face and figure turned as ever to the body of a lady named Katebet reclining on the top berth in the cabinet. The label at his head was:—

MUMMY
OF
AMEN-ARU
In the service of Queen Amenartas
About B.C. 650.

A curious, investigating infant from the country, in its anxiety to see how mummies were really made, had that morning broken the glass which usually covered the end of the case.

"Poor old fellow!" said Ethel Stanhope quaintly, "I wonder whether you had a few words with your sweetheart in B.C. 650. If you have any influence with the gods, Amen-aru, make up this little dispute—will you?"

There was a catch in her voice.

"How shall I propitiate you?"

As it happened, nobody else was just then in the First Egyptian Room. It is so easy for Londoners not to go to the British Museum. Ethel Stanhope looked round, and then she did a whimsical thing.

She kissed her finger tips, and laid them for a moment on the worn linen that enveloped the head of Amen-aru. It seemed to move a little as Ethel removed her hand.

"Now for home," said Ethel Stanhope; "and an evening with the miserables."

It was striking seven as Miss Stanhope, her boots deposed in favour of neat brown slippers (slippers so attractive that they cannot be referred to calmly here), poured out tea in her small flat in Burnham Chambers.

A knock came at the door, and she stopped for a moment.

"Yes, Mrs. Cookson?"

Mrs. Cookson, entering with her cap a little awry, essayed to adjust it, causing it to give to its wearer a look of frivolity.

"A gentleman to see you, miss."

"What name, Mrs. Cookson?"

"He wouldn't give no name, miss."

"Say I am not at home," remarked Ethel Stanhope, quite definitely.

"He's an elderly gent," said Mrs. Cookson excusingly, "and he said it was on a matter of business. Seems what I might term a foreign gent, too; but he speaks just as good grammar as me or you."

"If he won't give his name," said Ethel Stanhope, "tell him I am engaged."

Mrs. Cookson withdrew. She did not close the door (landladies close the door only in summer), and directly

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she had gone a tall, parchment-faced man, in a long overcoat and a large silk hat, came in. Ethel Stanhope looked hastily around to see that there was nothing in the room which was not meek for the sunken eyes of this elderly gentleman.

"How do you do?" He held out his hand. "I have had some difficulty in finding you. May I put this hat down here? It is not really mine, and I don't want it sat upon."

He spoke very slowly and pedantically, as one using a language to which he was unaccustomed.

"I will not take off my overcoat, I thank you. That also is not mine. I am in—well, rather——"

Ethel Stanhope started back as he came within the circle of light thrown from the scarlet-shaded lamp. She recognised some of the wrappings that he wore.

"You—you!" she gasped. "You are Amen-aru!"

"That fact," he said pleasantly, "has not escaped my observation. I have been asleep for a good long while, and my brain, I am happy to say, is all the fresher for it. May I sit back here?"

She sank into her rocking-chair, and the two little brown slippers went momentarily off the ground. He also sat down. He sat down slowly, as does a man whose joints are not what they were. The glow of the scarlet shade made the skin of his thin brown face the more human.

"But how did you come here?" cried Ethel Stanhope.

"I walked."

"But it all seems so hard to believe. How did you come to life?"

"That I owe entirely to you," said Amen-aru, with a slow bow. He adjusted the long overcoat over his knees. "The kiss you placed near to my lips awakened me."

"Good heavens!"

"Yes," he said, deliberately and agreeably. "Yes, they are good. It is, no doubt, a great and an exceptional boon to be able to come to life again."

"It is very awkward, though," she said. "It will lead to such a lot of trouble."

"Pardon me: I will see that no trouble arises. I shall go to Downing Street to-morrow morning to see the Foreign Office people, and——"

"How do you manage to speak English so well?"

"If you find yourself able to converse with less inconvenience," said Amen-aru gravely, "in Persian, or Median, or Assyrian, or Egyption, or——"

"English will do," she said, hurriedly.

Amen-aru inclined his head again.

"I shall get them to send me back to Egypt," he said. "I was in the Treasury of Queen Amenartâs, in the old days, and I—er—saved a good deal in one way and another. Her husband Pi-ânchi was only an Ethiopian, you see, and did not understand accounts. I gather from what I have casually over-heard in the Museum that there is some difficulty over there, and my presence might settle it."

"That's not a bad idea," said Miss Stanhope with much relief. "Will you have some tea?"

"I won't make any experiments," he said. "I shall have to be very careful of what I eat and drink for some time to come. You can, however, do something else for me. Your name is, they told me at the Museum, Miss Stanhope."

"Ethel Stanhope."

"Quite so. You will understand, Miss Stanhope, that you are the only friend I have in the world at the present time. You are—you will excuse me for mentioning it—entirely responsible for my return to life."

"I am very sorry."

"That is not complimentary."

"I did not mean," said Ethel hastily, "that I was sorry that you were alive. I only meant——"

He held up a gaunt shrivelled hand for silence.

"I must not forget also that I am in your debt. I shall repay your services in a manner that cannot fail to be gratifying to you. Just at present I want to know if you can recommend me to a good hotel."

It is never easy to think of a modern hotel suitable for a man who has been used to the manners of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. Ethel, her self-possession half restored, sipped her tea and thought. The important thing was to get rid of Amen-aru with all convenient dispatch. She rang for Mrs. Cookson.

"For this gent?" inquired Mrs. Cookson, inclining her head to Amen-aru. "Well, now, let me see."

Mrs. Cookson looked at Amen-aru as though she were measuring him for an hotel that would exactly fit him.

"Most foreign persons go Shaftesbury Avenue way. Is your friend French, may I ask, miss?"

"This gentleman is from Egypt, Mrs. Cookson."

"Fancy that! Been in England long, sir?"

Amen-aru answered that he had been in England for some time.

"It's a long journey," said Mrs. Cookson in tones of commiseration. "I know what it must be only from going to Clacton by the boat."

Ethel Stanhope recalled the garrulous housekeeper to the subject immediately under discussion, and Mrs. Cookson puckered her brows thoughtfully.

"I don't think you can do better," said Mrs. Cookson, "than go to Farebrothers', sir. Most respectable family hotel jest off Southampton Row, where you get all the comforts of a home. Mention my name to Mrs. Farebrother, and tell her I sent you, and that woman'll look after you as though—well, just as though, in a manner of speaking, she was your own mother. She's one of those women who take a reg'lar sort of interest in——"

"Farebrothers', did you say, Mrs. Cookson?"

Mrs. Cookson spelt the name with some want of luck.

"If you will excuse me," said Ethel, rising, "I will put on my hat and coat and see you there."

"You are very good," said Amen-aru.

Mrs. Cookson enlivened the time, in the temporary absence of Miss Stanhope, with reminiscent jest and story anent foreign gentlemen, who had taken chambers which were under her control, and had behaved in divers eccentric ways. Ethel, on her return, found Amen-aru, oblivious of Mrs. Cookson's monologue, looking at a portrait.

"Your brother?" he inquired.

"That," she said, flushing a little, "is Mr. Hugh Waterson. He is a barrister."

"He is young and well-looking."

Somehow, in spite of the great row of this afternoon, she could not help feeling gratified at this encomium. Mrs. Cookson bowed herself out after spelling (with increased want of success) the name of the hotel.

"He is the best fellow in the world," she cried.

Amen-aru would have raised his eyebrows if he had possessed any.

He was silent for a moment.

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"This is your hat, I think," she said. She noticed that it bore inside the inscription Samuel Smithson, the name of a Museum attendant. "If you will go out first I will turn down the gas."

"I had much difficulty," he said, "in unrolling a sufficient portion of my covering. It was so hard to get my arms free; and there was a risk of an attendant coming at any moment, and that would have necessitated an explanation."

They turned into Great Russell Street.

"I hope," said Ethel, "that you will not mention my name when you do explain the matter."

"You may rely upon that," answered Amen-aru. "But it does not follow that I shall ever forget you."

"I don't ask you to forget me," she said brightly.

"If you did I should be forced to disobey the command," said Amen-aru. "There was once a Greek girl who came with her family, owing to the encouragement given to her countryfolk by Psammetichus, and I remember feeling very tenderly towards her. But that, of course, is all over now. Is this the Museum?"

The great electric lights in their globes of china sent a mist of white light over the yard, and athwart the road in front of the Museum.

"Look up at me," said Amen-aru.

She looked up at the brown weazened face.

"I am going to make you," he said, setting the incongruous silk hat more firmly on his head,—"I am going to make you my wife."

"No, no!" said Ethel, taking her arm away.

"My wife," he said firmly. "You kissed me, you know."

"Indeed, that was only done thoughtlessly."

"This that I do now," said Amen-aru, "is well considered."

He stopped. Before she could guess his intent, he had kissed her with his thin withered lips.

"Thus," he said, with an air of dignified friendship—"thus do I return——"

He stopped suddenly, with an amazed, affrighted air. They were near to the big iron gates of the Museum. A few people were going in for the evening opening.

"You should not have done that," cried Ethel.

"Indeed, no. I have returned the kiss which brought me to life. I feel the old somnolence coming. Won't you please, *please*, give it me again?"

"I cannot," she said.

"Then I must go back?"

"If you don't mind."

The gaunt figure in its queer costume turned. It hesitated a moment, and then walked up the flagstones, and Ethel saw it ascend the steps slowly.

It disappeared into the Museum.

"Ethel!"

She turned at the sound of a familiar voice.

"Hughie," she said.

"Who is that?" demanded Mr. Hugh Waterson.

"An old—a very old—friend," she said.

He gave a whistle of relief.

"Dear little girl," said Mr. Hugh Waterson, "I was all wrong about that affair this afternoon."

"So was I," said Ethel readily.

"And I don't think I knew how very much I loved you until I saw you with this—this old friend. I find that I care for you more than I can express."

"Very well, sir," said Miss Stanhope delightedly. "Don't you go and forget it again."

George Mortimer.

"Thou shalt not—"

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The writer of

"Thou shalt not—"

who, under the pen name of Mrs. Stanton Morich has chosen to veil an identity well known to the reader of contemporary literature, pleads, through the lips of "Miss Skittles," for such even-handed justice for herself and her sisters in sorrow as was meted out by Him who uttered the eloquent rebuke, "Let him that is without sin among you first cast a stone."

"Thou shalt not—"

COMMENCING IN THE

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for April 22nd. Price One Penny.

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

III.—A BACKWOODS IDYLL.

HE was well known in all parts of the Cohutta Valley, although he had no possessions to make him conspicuous among the humble people of that sequestered spot. None of them ever wore as shabby clothing as he, or was so slovenly in appearance.

He hardly knew the name of a hair-brush or a comb, nor had his bearded face ever felt the touch of a razor. His toes were always protruding from his worn-out shoes, and his ragged trousers seldom had anything to hold his braces on to them except a thorn, a sharpened stick, or a nail.

People did not give him credit for having an independent thought; and yet when alone he always walked with his head hung down, and was known to sit for hours by himself in the moonlight on pleasant summer nights, or in the bright sunshine of a winter's day.

They had given him the nickname of "Ring Joe," because when he spoke—which he rarely did under any circumstances—he had a trick of moving his right hand in a circle before the person or persons he was addressing. Although he was constantly laughed at for this habit, he seemed unable to break himself of it.

He was ugly, as a matter of course. His hair was long, of a yellow shade and always unkempt, and his finger-nails were uncared for. He was never known to show the slightest indication of anger at the many practical jokes that were constantly being played upon him. He never smiled, except when someone did him a kindness—then his blue eyes shone, and his features underwent a change.

He was a farmer like most of the other inhabitants of the valley, and no one disputed that he was a very hard worker. He lived alone in a cabin on the land he rented and cooked his own meals. He never asked the advice of his neighbours about the planting, the reaping, or gathering of his crops; and yet he seldom failed to do as well in his undertakings as any of the others, who seemed unable to make a move without first consulting somebody about its advisability.

He attended the meetings regularly at the little log church, a few miles from his cabin. Not a few who found pleasure in meeting their friends, and inviting them home to Sunday dinners as they stood gossiping after the service was over, wondered what Ring Joe could find to draw him there to his lonely seat in the corner. He usually arrived long before anyone else, and sat under the trees, and waited for the congregation to arrive. It could not be because he was seeking religion, they said, for he had never been known to stand up for prayer, or to ask for spiritual advice. During the revivals many of them became deeply interested in religious subjects; some openly requested the prayers of the church, and some shouted aloud and declared that they were blessed, were born anew, and felt they would not sin again; but Ring Joe sat unmoved in his corner, and even looked frightened when the sisterhood came to plead with him to take more interest in the meetings.

Now and then someone would laughingly say that he was not the fool he looked. One old woman said that it was her opinion that Joe had never got over the death of his mother—that he had never loved any other except her.

When he went to the corn-shuckings he sat apart from the rest of the people, had nothing to say about any one, but did more work than any three that were there. He never joined in the singing, nor the dancing, nor the playing of the games. But he was more ready to bring up the horses for the ladies to mount than any of the well-dressed swains present.

"It's a great pity men ain't like Joe when it comes to the treatment o' women folks. He's that mighty tender with a female that she cayn't he'p feelin' friendly to'ds 'im," said a young maiden one night after a corn-shucking, as Joe, after helping her to mount her horse, had run away to cut her a switch to use instead of a riding whip. This was Annie Wiggins, one of the prettiest girls in all the valley.

"Much obliged to you, Joe," she said, smiling down upon him as he handed her the switch. "Why don't you come over now and then? Yore cabin ain't so mighty fur from our'n. I tuk notice in passing t'other day that you wuz gettin' yore wheat groun' in powerful good order. Pap seed it, too, an' 'lowed you al'ays did keep your fences up mighty well. I wouldn't mind the way those folks go on. Nobody well raised ain't gwine to be eternally ding-dongin' at anybody like they do at you. Will you come over sometime?"

He grew blood-red beneath his matted hair. His toil-hardened hands began to make helpless revolutions. For an instant his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth.

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"There's nobody over thar that's a-botherin' therse'ves 'boot me, I reckon," he blurted out, with his head lowered to hide his confusion.

"Well, you ort to be more neighborly," said she regarding him with a sweeping glance of concern, as her horse dashed away to join some others ahead.

Joe walked off down the road toward his cabin in the moonlight.

"I'll be blamed," he said to himself, as he sat down on a large boulder and brought Annie Wiggin's pretty face before his mind's eye. "I'll be switched ef I know what's got in me; I never in all my life felt such a quar feelin'. Now, I wonder what made her ax me to come over."

That girl's face had been his companion for years. He had gone to meetings because she went. He had gone to the corn-shuckings and the parties; gone and allowed himself to be the target of all the weak jokes that the swains could invent, in order that he might see her smile and hear her laugh. When alone in the field he was even fond of remembering how she looked when she was dancing with someone else.

He ran his fingers through his tangled hair, and looked down at the ragged mass of beard that lay on his breast. He was only thirty, and yet he might be taken for forty-five. The blood of shame suddenly flowed to his face. That very night they had taunted him about his uncouthness. They had done the same often before, but to-night it pained him inexpressibly to think that Annie had heard it.

The next day Joe's sister Martha, who lived on the other side of the mountain, was surprised to receive a visit from her brother. He sat down and was silent for a few miuutes. Presently he said:—

"Martha, I've tuk a notion I'll let you cut my hair ef you don't mind, an' trim my beard a little; they are continually a-gittin' pieces o' fodder an' sech in 'em when I feed my horses. Summer is comin' on, too, an' long hair is powerful heavy an' hot."

"I don't know whether you look wuss without it ur with it, Joe," said the sister, standing off and surveying him comically, after she had divested his head and face of the greater part of such a burden. "You look like a wild pusson with 'em, now you look like a skun rabbit, ur a brown an' white spotted calf. Upon the sides o' the head whar the hair was so thick, you look as white an' clean as a new-born babe, an' a lettle furder down you look as brown as a Comanche Injun. Fur any sakes don't show yorese'f about tell you git sunburnt all over alike."

Joe surveyed his face in the little cracked mirror on the wall, and shook his head gravely.

"Th' ain't no earthly use in me a tryin' to change my looks. I'm jest a scrub an' al'ays will be. I'm as much different to the common run o' folks as a pig is from the balance o' the litter."

As he trudged homeward over the mountain, Annie Wiggins' kindly smile and pretty face were before him. His heart swelled with a sort of soothing gratitude as he remembered that no one in all the world had ever spoken to him so considerately. He wondered if he would not have grown up differently, more like other men, if his mother had lived, and if he had not withdrawn himself from them as he had done since her death. On the brow of the high hill he sat down in the sunlight. With his eyes sweeping over the beautiful landscape, memories of the past crowded before him, tears came into his eyes.

Ever since he could remember people had laughed at him and called him silly and ugly, and never made an equal—and yet there were times when he felt an inward consciousness that he was not the intellectual inferior of many who made sport of him.

"Why don't you come over now and then? Your cabin ain't so verry fur from our'n."

Those had been Annie's words to him. How did she happen, out of all the ranks of men and women who despised him, to speak so considerately? Could it be that she had read the worshipful glances he had been casting at her for years, and taken pity upon him? The yellow sunlight shone like a divine benediction of Heaven on all the far-reaching valley. He arose and walked slowly onward. He would pass the spring branch, where she usually went on that day of the week to wash for her people. He did so long to see her now.

She was there under the spreading foliage of a beech tree, looking more bewitching than ever, with her plump arms exposed, and her wealth of hair flowing over her shapely shoulders.

"Howdy, Joe!" she exclaimed. Then she laughed aloud and with good-natured merriment as she saw the changed condition of his hair.

"I wouldn't aknowed you, 'cep' fur yore walk. Well, Joe, it's an improvement an' no mistake. It gives you a sorter quar look, but you look sprucer than you did before."

"I got my sister Marthy to do it," said he, ringing the air with his hand and blushing deeply.

The smile slowly vanished from her face. She wrung out her white sheet with a grimace caused by the strain on the muscles of her arms; she spread it broadly to the breeze, and then hung it over the bush to dry; she paused for a moment and looked at him, but she did not catch his eyes.

"Joe," said she, growing pale, and with a serious, firm expression about her mouth, "Joe, I git out of all patience with you. What sort of a man are you, anyway? You've got more in you than half o' these no-account fellers in this valley, an' yit you let 'em run over you dry-shod an' trample you in the earth. You are fur frum bein' a fool, an' yit they all try to make you one an' you 'low 'em. Ever since I seed you a-runnin' back'ards an' for'ards fur medicine an' the doctor when yore sister wuz sick, a-givin' yore self ten times as much trouble on her account as her own husband—ever since then I've been of a notion that any woman 'u'd do powerful well to have you to look arter her through her nat'ral life. There's too precious few men of your sort, an' too blessed many that'll leave a sick woman an' go off an' git drunk. Heaven deliver me from such a fate. I git so sorry fur you a'-livin' in yore lonely cabin by yorese'f, 'thout a woman's han' to do a turn fur you. You're done me an' pap many a good turn, an' I wish I could pay you back. Why do you live alone?"

He had turned two great staring eyes on her in surprise. He could hardly believe she was speaking of himself; he had been such an outcast for so long and had been the butt of so much ridicule that he had never dreamed that any one, she the very least of all, could find even the shadow of a good quality in him. She seemed to him to be an angel from above, bidding him hope when he had thought for so long that the doors of all the good in the world were closed against him. He could not answer her.

She seemed moved by his surprise and emotion.

"Why do you live by yourself, Joe?" Her voice was

quite husky, and her eyes were downcast as she repeated the question.

"I hain't had nobody to live with since mother died," said he, trembling. "Martha hain't no room fur me in her cabin. I mought jest as well peg 'long by myse'f."

"Did you never think of marryin', Joe?"

"No!"

"Why?"

He was sitting on a log. He hung his roughly shorn head, and his funnel-shaped hat, much too big for him since his hair was cut, fell into his lap. Why had he not thought of marrying? He had never had a thought of such a purpose but to one woman in all his life, and she was so high above him as the stars were from the earth. He might as well have thought of grasping the planet Venus as marrying her. His heart felt like a benumbed lump in his breast, as he ventured to look into her sorrowful eyes now sparkling with womanly tears. Those tears made her seem more angelic in his sight, but they lifted her even farther away from him. Then he swept his eyes down upon his tattered dress. It was no better than that of a beggar. His shoes were worn out, and his hands were as rough as stones. In contrast to himself she stood before his sight as the very personification of all that was graceful, beautiful and tender in creation.

He could not tell her why he had never thought of marrying. She read his thoughts and understood his silence, his humility. Her heart went out to him in a torrent of pity. His despondency wrung her heart cords.

She felt the strength of his adoration of herself even more than if he had ventured to express it in words. Her face lost all its colour, and took an expression of determination as she drew near him and sat down on the log by his side. He glanced at her then, and the blood ran into his face.

"Joe," said she, tenderly, "I believe you love me, I believe I'm the only woman in the world you ever did love, mebby the only one you ever will keer fur. It has made me happier than a queen fur a long time.

"I believe I love you with all my heart, jest as you are, 'thout a speck o' alteration. I don't know how I happen to be a-settin' here an' tellin' you, less'n it is kase you are so back'ard an' people had trod on you so long. I don't believe I could live another day an' see you troubled like you are and teased and treated like a dog among men, when not one o' 'em is fittin' to tie yore shoe-strings. I love you, an' I am proud of it."

The heavens seemed to split open before the dazed man. He essayed to speak, but his words clogged his utterance—he sat and held her soft hand in his rough one till the sun began to bleed in red rays as it sank to rest. Then Annie went to her home, and Joe to his. When he went to give his horses their evening meal in the stable adjoining his cabin, he threw his arms around their necks and hugged them in a paroxysm of joy.

Everybody in the valley was surprised beyond expression to hear that pretty Annie Wiggins was about to wed humble Ring Joe, but no more jests were passed at his expense. Indeed, they looked at him with glances of wonder mingled with respect, and forebore to call him by his nickname. He was a new man in more ways than one in their eyes. To their astonishment they learned that he had saved up quite a sum of money, and was about to buy a tract of land for himself.

Soon Joe and Annie were married. Somehow his hair and beard were always nicely trimmed, and his clothing irreproachable. They lived very happily for several years. Two children came along, and they added brightness to the cabin. Then Death threw his cold shadow upon the valley. Annie sickened and died. Sympathetic neighbours came to the bereaved husband, arranged the body for interment, and then bore it away to the little graveyard on the hillside. Joe went back to his cabin and little ones. One of them was one year old, the other two. He had lived there a long time without Annie—he would try to take up the same routine again. His hair began to grow long, and his clothing threadbare as in the past. He did not shed tears, but when he was alone he groaned out in his agony.

After a few months had gone by, his sister Martha and some of the good women in the neighbourhood began to urge him to marry again for the sake of the helpless children Annie had left behind. He hearkened to them. What they said was too true. Their advice seemed as vague to his tortured brain as a misty dream; but he began to think of following their directions as one lost in a swift running torrent of black, chilling waters might crawl upon the cold, barren shore, rather than sink and drown. They talked it in his ears from morning till night; he must do it, they said, that his motherless children might have womanly advice and attention,—he owed it to Annie's memory. They recounted the many virtues of the widow Sprague—she had tacitly given her consent to do all she could for the heart-broken man, as she, too, was alone.

He tried to look the situation over; but his mind was in a fog, he could only think as his advisers directed his mind—he yielded, leaving all arrangements to them. They almost led him to the church; he stood at the altar with his mind on the day when he had sat on the bench and looked over Annie's coffin at the minister who was preaching her funeral sermon.

He was hardly conscious of what he was doing when they drove him and his portly wife, older than himself, over to his cabin and left them. He had no realisation of what had taken place. He had a faint remembrance that his friends had promised that all would be for the best, and he wondered how long it would be ere the pain would be taken from him.

The new wife went into the cabin and began to cook his supper, it was then dusk. Joe sat down and took his two children up in his arms. He rocked back and forth with their soft faces against his bearded cheeks, and watched the woman's movements as she busied herself about the fireplace. Close, and still closer he pressed his little ones to his breast. His heart was swelling almost to bursting. The older child put up her little hand and softly stroked his beard. In her face the flickering firelight showed him Annie's features. Gently he put them down, and went outside.

The moon was just beginning to rise—a mighty ball of fire over the hill-tops. His steps were unsteady as he wandered across the fields. He endeavoured to centre his confused thoughts upon something—anything. He leaned upon a rail-fence,—his features lighted up with indescribable tenderness. Annie was not dead—she was alive.

They were under the beech tree, she and he, where she had first opened to him the gates of earthly bliss. He saw again the dying sunlight. He felt the first warm touch of her pulsing hand,—her warm breath on his face. Ah! he had kissed her red lips there in the gloaming hour,—her beautiful tresses had mingled with

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his coarse beard. On flew his thoughts. Unspeakable happiness—she was his wife, the mother of his children, whose tiny hands bound him and her even closer together, bound his soul to her soul. He saw her in the firelight in his cabin seated by his side.

The moon climbed high up in the heavens, and had grown pale and small. His limbs were stiff with the dampness and coolness of the night, but the pictures of the past kept his blood warm, and his heart quickly beating.

His mind glided on. Annie sickened and died. He started. Dead? Gone from him for ever? Impossible! and yet over there on the hillside was her grave—he had seen her dead face in her coffin. And her children! Great Heavens! they were in the care of another woman as different from their own mother as a stone is from a flower. That woman was even at that moment waiting and wondering what his absence betokened.

He ground his teeth in agony. His breath came and went from his chest like that of a wounded, dying beast. Something seemed to press down upon his brain and drive every human thought, every idea of conventionality.

He was an animal. The agents of fate had behemmed him in, and were goading the thought of his young being in danger.

Annie's children—poor helpless innocents!—were at that moment under the care of a woman who had taken Annie's place. She would sit in Annie's chair the one to which he had put rockers of his own making. She would sit at the same table where Annie had eaten. His blood ran cold—she would sleep that night in Annie's bed, the bed from which she departed for the other life—he felt as if he were turning to stone.

He stumbled over the ploughed ground, and through the woods to the cabin. A candle was burning on the dining table; his new wife was sitting by the fire. She looked up into his face at first with a show of resentment and then with affright. At the stony look and glaring orbs, she cast down her eyes and said not a word. The children ran to him and clutched him with their tiny hands—on their faces were traces of tears. He took them into his arms and held them tightly, then he turned out into the night without a word to the silent, wondering wife. He strode across the meadow, the children fast asleep on his shoulders, and began to climb the mountain. He would pause now and then to rest and then go laboriously onward again.

Just as dawn was breaking he descended the opposite mountain side; and, as the first glinting rays of sunlight began to touch the valley, he arrived at his sister's house. She looked up in surprise as he appeared at the door, and intuitively comprehended the situation. Her heart melted. Martha put no questions to him, but made him come in and sit by the fire. She took the children, still asleep, from his stiff arms, and put them to bed. Then she told herself that she had made a mistake in inducing him to get married again; and she said, as she tucked the covers around the little ones, that her brother's children should never leave her. She would give them a mother's love.

Her tears flowed freely as she saw his head sink upon his breast. "He is asleep," said she, and her heart went out to him as it had never done before. When she had finished cooking the breakfast, she went to him to wake him. She touched him tenderly, but he did not wake up.

Ring Joe was dead.

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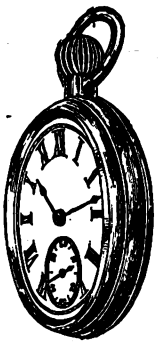

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THE ARTFUL FISHERMAN.

ONE day last September a camp fire burned brightly on the north shore of Lake Superior, at a point a few miles west of the mouth of Pigeon River. Every evening three of my friends and I sat around the fire to smoke after-supper pipes. When the pipes were glowing, the incidents of the day's hunting were lovingly dwelt upon, and hunting and fishing stories were told. One night, when I returned to camp from the dark, clear waters of Lake Superior without the "whales" that I had boastfully alleged I would catch, one of my comrades, whose hair was white, and whose form was slightly bent with age, looked through keen black eyes at me, and then looked beyond me at the past, and smiled pleasantly at the scenes which he conjured up.

"Frank," he said, "you can handle a double-barrelled shotgun fairly well for one of your age, and you can catch black-bass and brook trout when they are hungry. But you do not possess knowledge of lake trout, nor do you know how to catch them. I'll tell you a story, and then I hope that you will realise that to catch lake trout requires intelligence as well as bait," and he added, rather savagely for so aged and usually good-natured a sportsman, "and, my boy, bull-head luck don't count in lake trout fishing."

He said: "When I was a young man" (he is over seventy) "I spent a season in prospecting for copper mines on the south shore of Lake Superior. With me was a middle-aged Indian who had spent his life in hunting and fishing and loafing in the forests and on the waters of the lake region. He knew the wilderness thoroughly. He knew where the deer and moose lived.

"He knew in which lake the wild waterfowl could be found, and he knew where trout, pickerel, and black bass lurked in dark, cold water. He possessed all desirable knowledge relative to the region. One night, when we sat by the camp fire, the Indian was in a talkative, confidential mood. He said: 'In that lake,' indicating Lake Superior with a backward toss of his head, 'are very large trout. About three miles from here there is a reef in the lake where the water is not over fifty feet deep.

"'The trout gather on this reef in large numbers. They are always there, but they will not take the hook excepting in certain seasons. If you could catch one of these fish you would never again eat a pickerel.' Then he told of catching trout on this reef that were from three to four feet long, and that must have weighed from twenty to thirty pounds. Of course, I wanted to catch and eat one of these fish. The next day he paddled me to the reef. I fished for hours, but caught nothing.

"That night I thought out a plan. The next morning I sent to the settlements for supplies, and in the list of articles needed was a fish globe, and I wrote to my agent to be sure to send me the globe. In due time the globe arrived. I filled it with water, caught a few minnows, and put them in it. Then I tied a piece of cloth over its neck, first pulling out one half of the threads so that water could flow in and out. I tied a short rope to the shank of the globe and a heavy fish line around its neck. To the loose end of the short rope I tied a heavy stone for an anchor. I put a short, dry log in the canoe, and was ready to set my bait. The Indian watched my preparations with silent scorn. Catch lake trout with a glass jar! The scheme was too absurd to be worthy of a warrior's consideration. The savage had had a low opinion of me before.

"But now I had lost all caste. He reluctantly paddled me and my childish traps to the reef. He grunted, pig-like, when I spoke to him. Words were not to be wasted on such as I.

"Arrived over the reef, I carefully lowered the stone anchor and the minnow jar, where the stone struck the bottom, and pulled the line taut and tied it to the little log which I had thrown overboard, and which was sufficiently buoyant to support the globe that was suspended in the water about 4ft. from the bottom.

"I believed that the lake trout would see the minnows, that they would try to catch them, that their repeated failures would make them ravenous, that they would actually rub their noses against the glass until they became sore, and that, when I was ready to fish, they would be keen to bite. I laughed when I had the bait fixed to my satisfaction, and the Indian looked at me through keen eyes, as though he thought I had finally gone crazy.

"I did not visit the reef for two days. Then I said: 'Come, Henry, we will go catch some trout.' I took my lines, and a pail of minnows for bait, and bade the Indian get the canoe ready. He reluctantly obeyed. Arrived at the buoy, I baited a hook and dropped the line. I felt the sinker strike the bottom, and then I felt a mighty tug on the line. The fish dashed for the deep water. The Indian knew that I had hooked a fish just as quickly as I did, and he thrust his paddle in the water, and we followed the fish so as to get away from the buoy line. Then I pulled the fish in. No artistic playing with an eight-ounce rod, but just heavy hand-over-hand pulling. The fish weighed twenty pounds. The Indian's eyes blazed with excitement. He struck his open mouth with open palm to express his astonishment, and quickly paddled me to the buoy.

"Again I dropped the line. Again the bait was instantly grabbed and the eager fish darted off. We followed till beyond danger of entanglement with the buoy line, when the fish was pulled into the canoe. The fish were as twins. Two were sufficient to supply my party with food, and I refused to catch more, much to the disappointment of the Indian, who wanted to load the canoe. Every other day after that the Indian—now most respectful in his manner and speech—and I caught from two to three trout. They were the best fish I have ever eaten.

"When I left the region, not having found a copper mine, the Indian begged for the globe, saying; 'Give it to me. I will caché it in the forest. When I want trout I will set it and catch them. No other Indian who lives on the shores of the great lakes can catch these trout out of season. I will be a great man, and may be I will become a chief. At any rate, I will be strong medicine.' So I gave the globe to him, and left one happy savage in the north woods."

I considered that a good story and a true story, and I resolved to imitate my aged comrade. So, on the following morning, I rigged up my glass sugar bowl, filled it with minnows, and anchored it in the lake, and the next day I fished there and never got a bite. I hauled in my bowl and rowed to the shore, and said nothing about my failure, but I silently denounced my aged comrade as one who exaggerated the successes of his youth.

JAMES RUBY.

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Every man and woman in search of HEALTH should write without delay for the NEW MEDICAL WORK, *Health, the Sunshine of Life*, which will be sent POST FREE to any address on application. The treatise contains full particulars of the treatment of the various ills that flesh is heir to. It also contains a selection from the thousands of testimonials received in favour of the ELECTROPATHIC BELT. ADVICE FREE of charge (personally or by letter).

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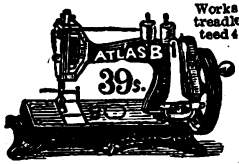

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SHORT TRUTHS.

M.—You are wrong. The military custom of saluting by bringing the hand into a horizontal position over the eyebrows is thus accounted for: It is supposed to date back to the tournaments of the Middle Ages, when, after the Queen of Beauty was enthroned, the knights who were to take part in the sports of the day marched past the daïs on which she sat, and as they passed shielded their eyes from the rays of her beauty.

C. H.—Wild horses have increased to such an extent in Queensland that the animals are being shot with a view to reducing their number.

Colonist.—When a settler in the North-West Territory wants to go to Ontario to be married, the Canadian Pacific Railway sells him a matrimonial ticket at the usual rate, and, on presenting the return coupon and a marriage certificate, he is entitled to free transport for his bride.

E. G. L.—There is only one wooden church building in England to-day—a chapel, guarded by a tower over 200 years old, in Greensted Park, near Ongar.

Kate.—Perhaps Sweden would suit you. In that country women vote in the cities for municipal councillors, and in the country for members of the county council. And as the latter body appoint the members of the Upper Chamber of Diet, the women may be said to exercise a direct power in Swedish affairs.

E. T.—Warm weather decreases the consumption of bread by about one-fifth.

Figlia.—In Italy breach of promise is looked upon as a very serious offence, and if it is the girl who breaks her word and goes back from her engagement she wins the unpleasant sobriquet of "civetta" or owlet, is shunned by all the "eligibles" of her locality, and rarely succeeds in making a satisfactory match.

Veg.—Edible lily roots have long been a popular article of food in Japan, and it appears not unlikely that they may become so in Europe. A firm at Erfut has put on the market the *yumna yari*, a Japanese variety, which is perfectly hardy. It is prepared for the table like asparagus or cauliflower. There is no reason why the bulb should not be as good as its widely-spread and beneficent cousin, the onion.

Arch.—In Gothic sculpture and tracery angels are sometimes portrayed practising on the bagpipe. It was occasionally used in churches before the introduction of the organ, which occurred early in the fifteenth century.

Law.—The average cost of a criminal prosecution in Britain at present is set down by experts at £33.

E. V.—Runaway horses are unknown in Russia. No one drives there without having a thin cord with a running noose round the neck of the animal. When an animal bolts the cord is pulled, and the horse stops as soon as it feels the pressure on the windpipe.

A. S.—Some of the Australian aborigines dine heartily on butterflies, millions of which they devour every year.

M. A. H.—A Turkish turban of the largest size contains from ten to twenty yards of the finest and softest muslin.

Z. E.—There are three places where green snow is found. One of these spots is near Mount Hecla, Iceland; another fourteen miles east of the mouth of the Obi; and the third near Quito, South America.

C. L.—Yes, a man who was to hang by the neck thirteen days and nights was the attraction at a Parisian café recently. The doctors, however, stopped the performance at the end of the fourth day, the man being in a critical condition. His name is Durand. He attained notoriety some time ago by standing on a pedestal at Marseilles for twenty-eight consecutive days.

Artilleryman.—The rage for monster cannon that has prevailed was rampant in the fifteenth century, when the great bronze cannon of Mahomet II. was cast, as well as larger pieces. One of these, firing spherical stone shot of 1,100lb. weight, is preserved, with specimens of the projectiles, in the Rotunda at Woolwich.

D. I.—There is an easy, simple way to tell if a diamond is genuine. Make a small dot on a piece of paper with a lead pencil, and look at it through the diamond. If it shows but a single dot the diamond is genuine. If it shows more than one, or the mark appears scattered, it is false, no matter what it cost.

B. A.—Balloon racing was a form of petty gambling on the Continent a short time back. A number of toy balloons were set off at the same time, each bearing a post-card having on it the umpire's address, and a request to the finder to note the time and place of the balloon's arrival. Bets were made and the stakes awarded on the result of the replies received within a week. The balloon that travelled the greatest distance in the shortest time got the prize. Your friend refers to this sport.

T. R.—The Sultan of Turkey not only has a rigid censorship of the Press, but he has ordered that no newspapers be published until the afternoon, so that the censors will not have to forego their morning nap in order to supervise them.

Oys.—In North Dakota there is a hill, 200 feet in height, formed almost entirely of oyster shells. At Castle Hill, near Newhaven and not far from Brighton, there is a layer of oyster shells just under the turf. The layer is several feet thick, and this really forms the summit of the hill.

P. M.—You mean the East Indian ship worm. It will in a few months destroy any vessel by eating out the interior of the beams and planks. They will be left a mere shell that can be shattered by the fist.

Mater.—Fruit wrapped in brown paper will stand fifteen degrees more cold than if not thus protected.

Simon.—In all the world there is in coin £716,521,000 of gold and £808,540,000 of silver.

Optics.—A white object of any size can be seen in sunlight at a distance of 17,250 times its diameter; that is to say, if it is a white ball a foot in diameter it can be perceived at a distance of 17,250 feet.

Post.—This has been done at Aixe-la-Chapelle, where women postmen have been appointed in place of men, who have been discharged. The new "postwomen" wear a black skirt, a yellow belt, and a little glazed hat with a yellow ribbon. They carry a little letter box attached to a strap slung over one of their shoulders.

T. B.—The Danube flows through countries in which fifty-two languages and dialects are spoken. It is 2,000 miles in length, and bears on its current four-fifths of the commerce of Eastern Europe.

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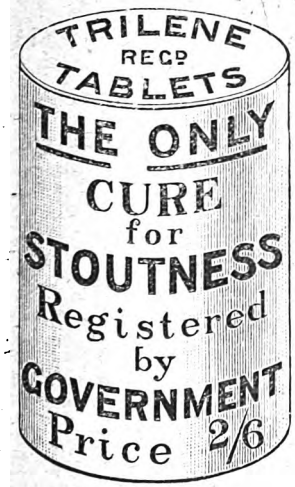

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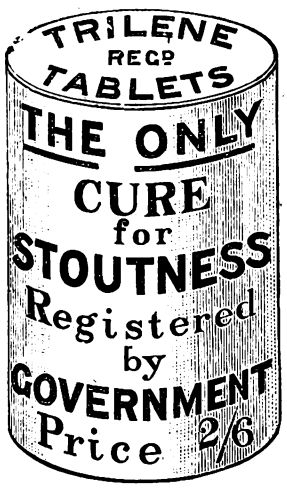

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary.

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, say: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Serg. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 40 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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naway horses are unknown in No

Oys.—In North Dakota there is a hill, 200 feet in height, formed almost entirely of oyster shells. At Castle Hill, near Newhaven ... 1 7 6
... 1 12 0

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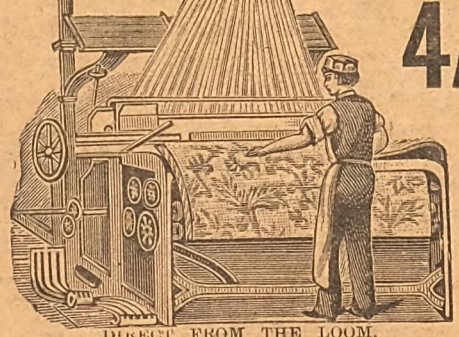

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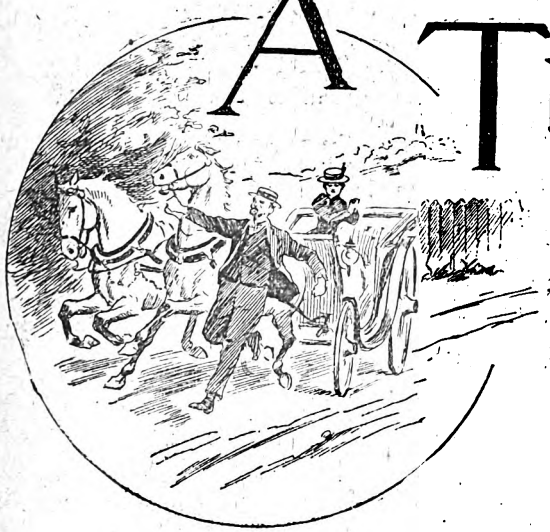
A TRAMP'S ROMANCE.



"EXCUSE me, miss, are you hurt?"

"No, sir, thank you."

The first speaker was a young man twenty-three years of age, and he was about the most sorrowful, tramp-looking person that could be found in a month's journey.

He was tall and rather thin, with dark hair, somewhat long, and a scrubby beard and moustache, while his eyes had such a mournful expression that you could easily see he had known much hardship and misfortune. Yet, in spite of this fact you would have to laugh at his general appearance, for he was dressed in the remnants of what had once been a blue linen suit, and had on a pair of shoes of which very little was left but the uppers, and these, together with a straw hat that had only half a brim, constituted his attire.

Yet, notwithstanding the fact that this young man, to all outward appearances, seemed to be a regular tramp, you could readily learn from his manner of speech and gentlemanly bearing that he had seen better days.

The person whom the tramp addressed was a pretty girl of twenty, the only child of James Miller, the proprietor of a large boatbuilding establishment.

Ever since her mother's death, two years and a half ago, it had been the custom of Evelyn to visit her mother's grave two or three times a week, and it was while returning from one of these visits, and while driving along the road leading to her home, that the horses became frightened at a cyclist, who passed in front of them, just as they reached a cross road, and became so uncontrollable that Evelyn could do nothing but let them dash down the road, and hope that someone would see her predicament and manage to stop them before they brought themselves and her to grief.

On the horses dashed for more than half a mile, throwing such a cloud of dust that it was impossible for Evelyn to see anything in front of them, and it was not surprising that she should have given utterance to a scream, when, with a severe shock, the carriage came to a halt, throwing her from the seat, through the air, and into the arms of a tramp who seemed to have been waiting there, so as to be able to catch her before she reached the ground.

As the tramp caught Evelyn he gave utterance to the above question, and upon learning that she was not hurt he said:

"Your carriage is very badly damaged, miss, and is of no use to you in its present shape, so, if you will allow me, I will go back to town for help."

"No, thank you," said Evelyn, "that is unnecessary; it is not far to my home, and I can easily walk."

"But the horses and carriage, what's to be done with them?" asked the tramp.

"I will send someone for them," replied Evelyn, "and I must ask you to come up to our house to see my father. He will wish to thank you for your kindness and bravery in saving me from what would, perhaps, have been a very serious accident had the horses been allowed to go on."

"Excuse me, miss, I shall have to refuse your request," said the man. "I think myself amply repaid for the little assistance I gave you, by receiving your thanks alone."

"Can nothing induce you to come and see my father?" asked Evelyn.

"No, miss," replied the tramp, "I do not wish any further thanks; but if you wish to show me more kindness you may tell me whom I have had the honour of assisting."

"Why, certainly," said Evelyn, "here is my card, and now I must be going. Will you please stay here until I send someone to get the horses and carriage?"

"Certainly, miss," said Jim (for that was his name), as he took the card she handed him.

After again thanking him Evelyn started down the road, leaving the tramp standing near the broken carriage, watching her as she went, until a bend in the road hid her from view.

For a long time after Evelyn had gone Jim stood in the same place and appeared in deep thought; so occupied was he that he did not notice an old woman who came up the road until within about four feet of him, where she stopped to pick up something, which she immediately put into her pocket, as though she were afraid to let anyone see what it was.

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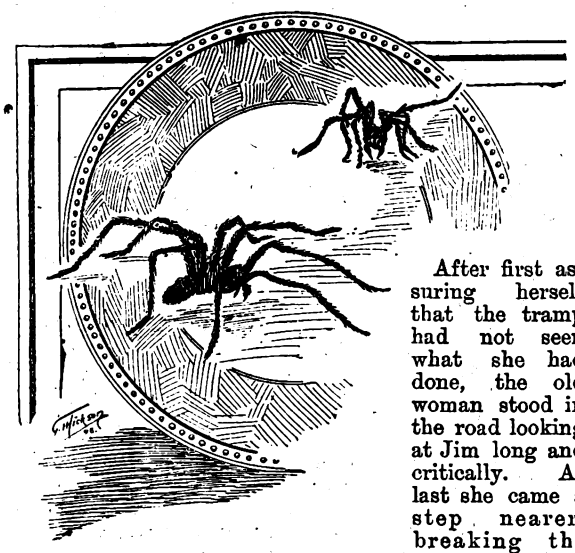

After first assuring herself that the tramp had not seen what she had done, the old woman stood in the road looking at Jim long and critically. At last she came a step nearer, breaking the train of the tramp's thoughts with a harsh laugh.

"Well, what's come over you, old woman?" asked Jim, very much amused at the queer appearance she presented in her present attitude.

"Ha, ha, fine looking girl, isn't she?" said the old woman, entirely ignoring Jim's question.

"Yes," replied Jim mechanically.

"Met with an accident, didn't she?" was the old woman's next question.

"Can't you see she did?" returned Jim.

"Yes, I can see," said the old woman; "but I should like to have the details. Was she hurt?"

"Not a bit," returned Jim, getting somewhat tired of the old woman's inquiries.

"Not hurt?" repeated the old woman in a surprised tone; "well, strange things happen sometimes. How did the accident happen?"

"Look here, old woman," said Jim; "what makes you so inquisitive? Do you know this young girl, or do you just want to know all about this accident out of curiosity?"

"Well," replied the woman with a laugh, "I can't say that we are strangers, as it happened that the girl's father and I were neighbours when children, and we were educated in the same school, and in later years, when my parents became poor, I secured a place in the family of the girl's aunt as a nurse to her only child, who was sickly and required a great deal of attention; so you see I not only know the girl and her father, but I know the rest of the family as well."

"That being the case," returned Jim, "I don't mind telling you the details, so far as I know. I was—"

"You don't know all about it, then?" interrupted the old woman.

"No," replied Jim. "All I know is that I was sitting under this tree, taking a rest, when I heard a noise on the road towards the lake, and when I looked in that direction I saw a runaway pair of horses coming; but I could not see if there was anyone in the carriage or not on account of the dust. Yet I determined to stop the horses, just the same, and I did so, forcing them to run into this tree; and, as fate would have things, the young girl, who proved to be in the carriage, was thrown in my direction, so that I had no difficulty in saving her from a fall."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the old woman, again breaking into that loud laugh of hers.

"What's the matter now?" asked Jim.

"Beauty in distress; tramp to the rescue," replied the old woman, laughing between each clause.

"Isn't that romantic enough to please any girl?" asked Jim, also laughing.

"Not in this case," said the old woman, "Miss Evelyn Miller would have preferred it to have been a handsome young man instead."

At the mention of the name of Evelyn Miller, Jim was surprised, and looked quickly at the card he still had in his hand, and after gazing at it for some time he said:

"You say you know all about these Millers; will you please tell me something about the family? It seems to me as if I have heard the name of Evelyn Miller before. What is her father's first name?"

"James," replied the old woman, looking at the tramp in a surprised way.

"James," repeated Jim, thinking deeply. "Yes, I have heard that name also, but I cannot at present remember where or when."

"Perhaps you heard it in the town," said the old woman.

"No," replied Jim, "it is longer back than that. Won't you tell me something about these people?"

"Yes, I will tell you all you want to know," said the old woman, "but not here, for here comes the town blacksmith, and I must be going. Come to my house, on the road near the lake, any time you wish."

"Whereabouts on the road near the lake?" asked Jim.

"Oh, anyone will tell you where Old Hannah lives," replied the old woman. "Good-day."

"Good-day," returned Jim, as he watched the old woman disappear.

A few minutes after Old Hannah left the vicinity the blacksmith came up and took charge of the wrecked carriage, and as there was no further need for Jim's help, he left that place, going in the direction of the sawmill, where he intended seeking work.

Upon reaching it he inquired for the foreman, and making his wants known was immediately employed as one of the yard hands.

When Mr. Miller returned home in the evening of the day of the accident, he found Evelyn on the lounge in the library prostrated with convulsive weeping, and he went over to her and attempted to ascertain the cause. For a long time he was unsuccessful, but at last Evelyn managed to check the flow of tears long enough to say:

"Father, you no doubt have heard of the accident that happened to me this morning, and of my being rescued by a tramp?"

"Yes, my child. I have heard all about it from Johnston, the foreman of the mill. Old Hannah told him, and she also said that you were not hurt. Is that true?"

"Yes, that's the truth; I am not hurt, thanks to that tramp; but a far greater misfortune has befallen me than getting hurt," said Evelyn.

"Why, what has happened?" quickly asked Mr. Miller in surprise.

"I lost my locket, in which there were mother's and Alvin's photographs," replied Evelyn between sobs.

"Well, my child, that is a great loss to you; but how do you know that it cannot be found?" said Mr. Miller.

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"I don't think it will ever be found again," returned Evelyn.

"I will have a search made, anyhow," said Mr. Miller, "and I will have it done early to-morrow morning, as it is now too dark to see anything very plainly."

So the next morning a very energetic search was instituted, but without success, and although Mr. Miller offered a large reward for the return of the locket, which was Evelyn's most valued possession, it could not be found.

On the Sunday following the day of the search for Evelyn's locket, Old Hannah was sitting near the door of her old house, thinking deeply, while in her hand she held a golden locket of old-fashioned design, and if anyone had stolen up behind her and looked over her shoulder they would have seen that the locket was open, and that it contained the photographs of two persons, one of a beautiful woman of about thirty years of age, and the other that of a handsome young man, who did not appear to be over twenty years old; and it was this latter picture that caused the sad expression that overspread Old Hannah's face while she sat looking at the handsome face exposed to her view.

How long the old woman would have remained in that position it is hard to say, had not Jim come along and stopped in the doorway, shutting out the fast-fading light, and thereby causing Hannah to look up and exclaim:

"So you have come, have you? Well, I half expected you would some time. I know you are anxious to hear that story about the Millers."

"Yes," replied Jim, "I came to hear that story."

"Well, come in and sit down, and I'll not disappoint you," said Hannah.

After Jim had sat down and Hannah had also taken a seat near him, she said:

"I'll begin with the time when James Miller was a young man, and in telling you their history I must also tell you a part of mine, for I was mixed up in their family for a long time.

"When James Miller was young he was a very swell young man, and as he was fond of girls' society, he had a great many admirers among the young ladies of the neighbourhood.

"James and I were brought up together, and as he always treated me kindly and went with me a good deal, I was very fond of him. He often declared that he loved me and could not live without me; so, when one day he asked me to become his wife, I consented, and we were engaged.

"The wedding was to have taken place in about eight months, but, when five months had passed he happened to meet another girl, who was known as a perfect beauty; and he was so captivated by her charms of loveliness that after seeing her two or three times he had neither eyes nor heart for anyone else but her.

"So, in consequence, I was forgotten, the engagement broken, and shortly after having met they were married. But they did not live a very happy life, and this was said to have been owing to the fact that Mr. Miller was not as rich as people first believed he was.

"Mr. and Mrs. Miller had two children. The first was a girl, and she died shortly after birth; while the second was also a girl. She looks very much like her mother, but has a better disposition; and, as I always hated her mother, I hate her, too, for the reason that she bears that resemblance to her mother.

"About two years before Evelyn's birth my father lost all his money through speculating, and I had to look for something to do. Luckily, I secured a position in the home of Mrs. Livingston, who was a sister to Mr. Miller, as a nurse to her only child, a boy, who was a year old, and who had contracted a kind of spinal disease from falling off a chair.

"The child was dangerously ill and required constant attention, and although he had the best medical assistance obtainable, it was about three years before he was well enough to get about alone.

"Even then the doctors said that, from the fall, the brain was still weak and that it was liable to remain so for a long while. They also said that if the boy should suffer any severe shock, he would be liable to have brain fever, for in its weak state the brain was very susceptible to that disease."

Here the old woman stopped to light a lamp, for it was now quite dark. When she had again seated herself, she said:

"Of course, there was no further need for my services after Alvin, which was the boy's name, was able to go about by himself, so I left there, and as I could not secure anything else to do here, I went to Glasgow, and there became a nurse in one of the hospitals.

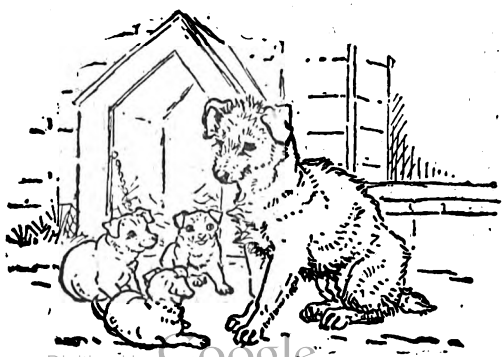
"I stayed there about sixteen years, and during that time I heard little of what was going on in my native place. I don't think I should have returned then, had not my father died, and I stopped here.

"When everything was again straight, and I had settled down to life in this small house, I learnt that Mr. Livingston had died during my absence, and that Alvin, then a young man of twenty years was engaged to his cousin, Evelyn, who had just passed her seventeenth birthday.

"They were to be married when he was twenty-one, but Providence willed otherwise, for about three months after my return to my old home, Alvin, together with two friends, went on a sailing excursion, and they were caught in a storm and the boat upset.

"All three of the occupants must have been drowned; at least two were, for their bodies were found in different places. They were the two young men that were with Alvin, and strange to say, Alvin was never heard of, nor was his body ever found, although search was made for it for a long time.

"About a year after Alvin's death or disappearance, Mrs. Livingston died of grief for her lost son, and as there was no nearer relative, Mr. Miller inherited her fortune; but in her will, Mrs. Livingston stated that if in the course of the next five years her son should be found, all her possessions were to be given him, except a certain sum of money, I forget how much, which was to



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be retained by James Miller; but no one thinks Alvin will ever return now, after three years of absence, so I suppose James Miller can keep the money."

During the recital of the Miller family history, Jim listened very attentively, and when the name of Livingston was mentioned he looked puzzled, but as the old woman went on with the story his face became clearer, until at last he seemed to remember some things that she spoke of, especially the part about the boat's being lost. When she mentioned that accident the tramp shook as if with an ague, but the old woman did not notice it, being too interested in what she was saying to notice anything. At last, when she had finished her story, Jim said:

"Miss Hannah, I thank you very much for your trouble in relating the Miller and Livingston family histories so minutely. I now can remember things that happened years ago; your story has given me back my memory, and if you wish I will tell you a story of a young man which, I think, is a sort of sequel to the one you have just related."

To say that Hannah was surprised at this speech would be putting it mildly. She was speechless with amazement, and when she regained control of her powers of speech she said:

"One minute; I wish to ask you a few questions before I hear your story."

"All right," said Jim; "I will answer them as best I can."

"Then," said Hannah, "tell me what you mean by saying that my story has given you back your memory; and I also wish to know how any story you can tell can be a sequel to mine."

"Well," replied Jim, "I can answer both your questions by telling you my story.

"Well," began Jim, "we are in June now, and it was on June 15th, three years ago, that my story begins. On that day, three young men, one who resided in this place, and two others, determined to go on a sailing and fishing excursion. So they hired a small sailing-boat and started out, intending to return the same day.

"Everything went well until they were about opposite Pentwater, when the wind began blowing a gale, and before they had gone very far a storm broke upon them with all the fury possible. The boat was upset, and only one reached the shore."

"The one who reached shore was certainly Alvin Livingstone," said the old woman, interrupting the tramp.

"Yes," answered Jim, "he was Alvin Livingston, but I did not know it until I heard your story."

"Now go on with your story," said Hannah; "what became of him?"

"When he reached the shore," continued Jim, "he was so weak and exhausted that he had to lay down and rest some hours before he could go further; but, strange to say, he had completely lost his memory, remembering nothing of what had happened, nor yet anything whatever of his past life, not even his own name, nor did he have anything about him by which he could be identified, the only thing he had with him being a gold watch and chain; but as the watch did not have his name anywhere, it could not help in identifying him.

"So in this state he wandered through the woods along the shore until he presently came to a small hut situated in the centre of a dense part of the forest.

"In the hut lived an old man who was somewhat of a hermit, who appeared to have some knowledge of medicine, for no sooner did he see the young man who approached the hut than he saw what was the matter with him, and he determined to nurse him back to health and strength, which he did during the two years and a half that followed.

"Although the young man was perfectly healthy in mind and body, he could never remember anything that had happened before the day when he was pronounced cured of mind and bodily weakness by the old man, who told him that he would never be able to remember his past life unless someone would tell him something about it which would appeal to his sympathy and cause him to think very hard of the past.

"About six months ago the old man died, and the young man left the vicinity of the hut and has been going from place to place ever since, trying to find some clue that would lead to his identity."

"How did you come to know him? Where is he now?" asked the old woman, excitedly.

"I know him because we tramped together," answered Jim. "As to where he is now, I will not say, but if you wish, I will bring him here to-morrow—that is, if you agree to two conditions."

"What are the conditions?" asked Hannah.

"The first," answered Jim, "is that you return to Miss Evelyn that locket which I saw you looking at when I came, and which I know belongs to her."

"And the second?" asked Hannah, in a somewhat angry tone.

"The second," replied the tramp, "is that you ask Miss Evelyn to come here to receive the locket at two o'clock to-morrow afternoon; and if you do so, Alvin will come here also."

"Well," said Hannah, "as I will see Alvin myself soon now, I will not need the picture in the locket, so I will consent to give it back."

"That is right," said Jim.

After spending a restless night Jim got up early the next morning and, after leaving a note to be sent to Johnston, saying that he would not be at the mill that day, he started for the next town, where he arrived about seven o'clock, and at once went to a pawnbroker, where he pawned a gold watch and chain. With some of the proceeds of this transaction, he went into a barber's shop, where he had his hair and beard taken off. This altered his appearance so that no one could recognise him, except by his clothes, which he also discarded for a new outfit, purchased at a shop near the barber's shop. After these changes were made, he looked respectable and defied anyone to recognise in him the tramp, Jim; but he did not go about the town, for fear some of his old friends would recognise him, but, instead, he walked slowly out into the country in the direction of the town from which he came that morning, and he so timed himself that he arrived in the vicinity of old Hannah's home just a little before two o'clock, and he only had time to enter the house and explain to Hannah that Jim and Alvin were the same person before they heard a carriage stop before the door and Evelyn alighted.

When Evelyn reached the house, she was met by Hannah, who welcomed her and invited her inside, and, after they were seated, Hannah drew from her pocket the lost locket and handed it to Evelyn, saying:

"Here, my child, is your locket, which was given me to give to you."

Upon receiving the locket, Evelyn immediately opened it, and, after looking at both pictures, said:

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"Miss Hannah, you do not know how I have missed this locket during the short time it was lost, and I most sincerely thank you for being the cause of its return."

"How did you miss it?" asked Hannah. "Haven't you another locket?"

"Yes," answered Evelyn, "I have another locket, but it was the pictures that I missed, for I always look at them often during the day."

"Have you no other pictures of the same person that you have in that locket?" asked Hannah.

"Of mother I have several; but this is the only photo Alvin ever had taken, and I value it so highly that I was completely distracted at its loss."

"How would you like to see Alvin again, alive and well?" asked Hannah.

"I would be very happy if I could see him again," replied Evelyn. "But, alas! he is now dead long ago, I am sure, or he would have returned before this."

"Do not be too sure," said Hannah. "I am positive that he will turn up again, and that time is not far off either."

"What do you mean?" cried Evelyn, noticing the convinced look on her face.

"Oh, nothing; only that he is not far off and will soon be here," said Hannah, looking over Evelyn's shoulder towards the door, where a form appeared.

At that moment someone behind her said:

"Evelyn, dearest, do you know me?"

Evelyn was on her feet in an instant, and, turning round, she looked at the speaker for a moment, then crying, "Alvin, Alvin, can it really be you?" she sprang forward and fell into his arms.

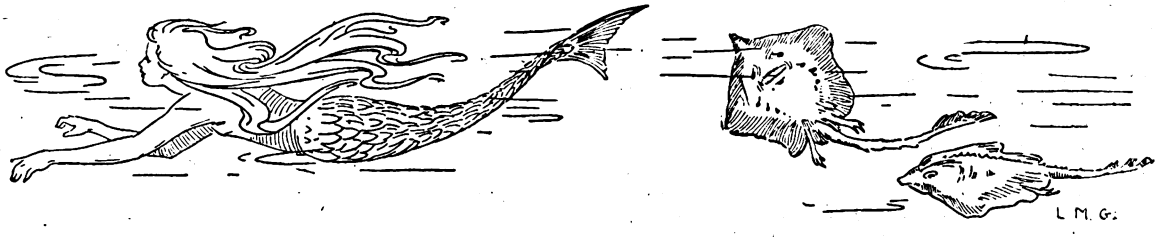
That night there was a family council in the parlour of the Miller residence, at which were present Mr. Miller, Evelyn, Alvin, Hannah, and Mr. Lawson, the family lawyer. Mr. Miller had called these persons together for the purpose of straightening out the family affairs immediately. He did not believe in delay, and wished to turn over to Alvin what was coming to him that very night, so that no one would suffer any inconvenience or unnecessary delay.

When everything had been straightened out to the satisfaction of all, Alvin rose, and addressing Mr. Miller, said.

"Uncle, you of course remember that Evelyn and I were engaged before that accident happened to me, and are still for the matter of that; but we have decided to take no more chances, and we wish you to live with us and share our happiness; will you?"

"I certainly will," replied Mr. Miller, "and I propose that Hannah be our housekeeper."

Mabel Maru.



A DREAM OF THE FINAL CATASTROPHE.

I stood on a high cliff. Twenty feet in front of me a perpendicular wall of rock went down, down, till it seemed one would have to look twice to see the bottom, where the waters of the harbour splashed against the boulders.

To-day the bay was as smooth as polished glass, save where the vessels coming in from the sea through the strait opposite the point where I stood left a ripple and a line of foam behind, like a flaw in the crystal.

The great city lay to the left of the strait. The burning midsummer sun, shining from a cloudless sky, was reflected by a hundred thousand chimneys and roof-tops; and the images of the high buildings and the myriad of vessels anchored in the harbour made the scene more like a mirage than reality.

So far above the city was my point of observation that not a sound, not even a murmur of the bustle and noise attendant upon its activity, reached my ears, though through the clear atmosphere I could distinguish moving objects, as in a camera obscura.

From the bay, too, although many vessels—huge ocean steamers, ferry boats, and yachts—were moving about, I heard only one sound: the interminable "puff-puff-puff" of a little tug-boat, which rapidly threaded its way among the other craft. So monotonous, indeed did this sound become, that I turned my eyes from the water and looked round at nearer objects.

To my right was a grove of oaks. In a clear space in the midst of the trees stood a white building, its gable towards me, which reminded me at first glance of nothing so much as the Parthenon as it used to be represented in the classical dictionary.

I had not noticed this building before, and as I stood and wondered, a troop of gaily-dressed young people came rushing out of the door and arranged themselves in groups on the mossy circles surrounding the trees.

At this moment my companion, who had lagged behind me, came up, and together we went towards the gay throng. Our approach seemed unnoticed.

Scarcely had we joined the group, when, raising my eyes, I saw to right and left dark thunder-clouds rolling rapidly towards the zenith. Broad flashes of lightning played about the horizon, while in sharper, zigzag

streaks the electric spark cut its path through the azure directly above our heads.

From the right, low mutterings of distant thunder were heard, and a chilling wind, rising suddenly, moaned among the pines in the distance, and rustled the leaves of the lindens under which we sat.

I glanced towards the building, and on the steps of the door which looked out upon the city there stood an old man, wrinkled and bent.

A faded dressing gown was corded about his waist, his feet were encased in embroidered slippers, and his right hand, which bore a long oaken staff, gnarled and twisted, trembled as the fierce blast struck him and tossed his thin grey locks.

In a shrill voice he cried:

"Come in! Come in! We are going to have a terrible storm."

Even as he spoke, and as if in corroboration of his words, the force of the wind increased almost to a gale, and the large drops of rain began to fall, slowly and gently at first, but with increasing vigour, till the patter on the leaves was lost in one long-drawn sound, almost a roar, as the wind drove the water through the trees.

Meanwhile the rest of the party had sought shelter in the building, but as I stepped forward to follow them my eyes rested on a sight which compelled me involuntarily to pause.

Ahead of me, beyond the bay, beyond the city, beyond even the waters of the ocean itself, a veil or shutter of more than inky blackness rose perpendicularly from the horizon. Up to the very heavens it seemed to stretch, and to both sides as far as the eye could reach. A sudden undefinable fear came over me, and held me rooted to the earth. My horror increased as I saw that this horrible veil was moving towards me, how rapidly I could not guess; but it seemed to cover the thousand miles between the horizon and the straits in barely an iota of time.

As it drew nearer to me I saw that it had also another motion, like that of a band-saw or an endless chain, as if a huge jack-towel of flexible blackness had been swung over two rollers on the nethermost bounds of the universe, and rapidly revolving, was eating its way deep into the very bowels of the earth; for as this horrible engine of destruction approached I perceived that it was cutting away the sea and the solid land, leaving a smooth, clean-cut edge, where these before had been.

"It will stop," thought I, "before it reaches the city."

But no; the dreadful Thing, like an insatiate monster, never paused or swerved for an instant, and a chill shock coursed through my veins as I watched first the points of land on either side of the strait, then the farthermost houses of the city, and then nearer objects fade into absolute nothingness.

The huge machine kept steadily pressing forward.

As street after street of the city melted away, the Thing approached nearer and nearer the waters of the harbour. Tall spires fell, and mighty buildings were swallowed up, but, until touched by the Thing itself, the remainder of the city was as firm and unchanged as ever.

The cries of the dying reached my ears at intervals, but so far distant was I that the noise sounded more like the squeak of a dying mouse than as if it came from the throats of a multitude of human beings.

Now the bay began to melt away. Ship after ship a moment ago riding peacefully at anchor, was swallowed up, and left not even a ripple, for the water and the bottom of the sea were likewise annihilated.

And now, above the ever-increasing roar of the vast black body, I heard again the "puff-puff-puff" of the little steam-tug, and as I looked I saw it coming at full speed directly toward the precipice on which I stood. In an instant the Thing had overtaken it, and as it disappeared, with one last hopeless scream from its whistle, like the despairing wail of a lost soul, there flashed over me the meaning of this awful catastrophe that I had been witnessing. It was the end of the world!

By a mighty effort I threw myself forward, clutching as I fell at a tuft of bunch-grass. Barely had I time to gasp out "Heaven, help me!" when the awful Thing, cutting through the cliff, as if it were paper, was upon me.

The earth beneath me gave way, and I plunged headlong down, down, into the blackest of darkness, and then all was silent and blank for a space.

* * * * *

A drop of rain on my face aroused me. I lay in the soft grass in the middle of a level meadow that extended on all sides as far as I could see. The setting sun was firing the western skies, and a few small rain-clouds scudded before the breeze. Hither she came and found me, and together we returned home.

Geo. Hyne.

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THE TAMING OF THE BEAR.

THE STRANGE PASSENGER ON THE ENGINE.

It was blistering—murderously hot—in Queensland, and I was in my ugliest humour. When I stepped up in the tender, after oiling, there sat a woman in the fireman's seat.

Strange how some women are always poking into places where they have no business. Where did she come from, I wondered. I was obliged to acknowledge that she was fair to look upon, but in my present mood I didn't want her there.

On the railway we become accustomed to the chronometer-like regularity of our work, and dislike to have it disturbed.

The slightest change, be it ever so trivial, in the monotonous repetition of our daily routine, irritates, and throws us out of balance for the entire journey.

On the last trip a set-screw had dropped out of the go-ahead eccentric on the left side. I reported it, and when I asked Saunders, the foreman, why he hadn't put one in, he answered, very cavalierly, that there was no need of it; one would hold as good as a dozen, if the eccentric was keyed on, and besides, he had no time. He added superciliously:

"If you fellers would get under your engines once in a while with a wrench, you wouldn't be dropping nuts and bolts and set-screws all over the line."

That was the rasp I got for a starter. Then my fireman failed to show up, and Saunders sent me the one extra man that he knew I particularly disliked to have work for me.

He was a great, gawky, ignorant, red-headed know-it-all, who satisfied himself, before he had been three months at the business, that he was the smartest man on the line.

He would contradict and argue with anybody from the master-mechanic down, or up, either.

When told to do a thing, he never failed to offer a suggestion as to how it should be done, and would enter into a long explanation as to why his way was superior to yours.

When you got angry, and peremptorily ordered him to do as he was told, he would reply, with a deprecatory smirk, as of one who submitted under protest:

"Oh, of course, if you say so, I'll do it your way; you're the boss."

I had crawled under her and replaced the set-screw myself. I was dirty, drenched with perspiration, and thoroughly exasperated with myself, Saunders, the fireman, and everybody else. And now, here was that woman, looking as calm and as sweetly content as though life were one long summer holiday, as no doubt it was in her case. Where was the fireman? No doubt he had invited her to ride; his assurance was equal to it. But I'd soon get rid of her!

"I'm going to ride with you, engine-driver," said she, with a pleasant smile.

"You'll have to get a pass to ride on the engine," I replied, wiping the oil-can industriously in order to avoid meeting the gaze of those all-conquering eyes of hers.

"I have a pass," she answered quietly.

"Let me see it, please," I said.

She handed me the bit of cardboard, which I wilfully disfigured with greasy fingermarks as I read to my discomfiture an order to drivers and guards to allow the bearer to ride on all trains and engines—signed by the General Manager.

"Is that all right?" she asked in, I thought, a rather flippant tone.

"Yes," said I; "you can ride."

The fireman returned with a piece of ice. He looked surprised; he blushed and bowed. She returned his salute with well-bred ease. They were strangers. I was conscious of a feeling of relief. He fixed up the cooler, and offered her a drink with the air of a Chevalier Bayard (who would have dreamed of him as a lady-killer!)

She drank from our battered and rusty tin cup as though it had been a silver flagon. He struck up a conversation with her at once. Though disdaining to listen, I overheard enough to learn that he was dilating on his own importance and the perils to which his calling subjected him. She was taking it all in and tickling his self-conceit with exclamations of surprise and admiration.

It was disgusting! They were giggling and snickering, and enjoying themselves over there exactly like a couple of fools.

"You'd better bank up your fire," said I.

"Oh, that's all right, Joe," he replied, with a nonchalant gesture; "my fire is well up; I can get it up after you pull out."

"Never mind about me pullin' out; hook up your fire now, an' put on the blower an' let 'er warm up a bit; I want some steam."

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"All right, Joe, just as you say," he replied with an air of condescension that made me feel like wringing his neck. But instead of going at it, he commenced to explain to the passenger what he was going to do.

She seemed greatly interested. Before he had finished the guard gave me a signal. I blew the whistle, and slipped her so that his fire was pretty well made up before he could get the door open. For the next half hour I kept him so busy baling coal into her that he didn't have much time to talk to anybody. About as fast as he threw it into the firebox I threw it out of the stack.

He placed her so that she could get air without being blown off the seat.

She thanked him so graciously that I hated him even worse than ever.

Every time the steam went down a pound I growled at him, but his good nature, like hers, was invincible. Whenever I ventured to steal a glance I found her looking straight at me, which was disconcerting. I tried to scare her by wheeling furiously over rough places and down steep grades, but she didn't appear to notice it.

About every month, on a railway, petty grievances accumulate, until the hotheads demand that a committee be sent to headquarters, and commence to talk strike. We were passing through one of these crises, and I was chairman of the committee.

We had already called on the General Manager twice, and were to go again in a day or two. Things were approaching fever heat on the line, and, as I rode along my mind was about equally occupied with thoughts pertaining to the committee business and wondering who my passenger was.

Suddenly, like a ray of sunlight breaking through a dark cloud, the whole thing became clear to me. She was the company's spy, and she was pumping that fool of a fireman to her heart's content.

When I got down to oil at the water-plug, I told him to bring me the oil-can. I got him round in front of the engine, told him my suspicions, and advised him to keep a watch on that tongue of his. He waved my suspicions aside, in his usual airy manner, and hinted that I was jealous.

When I got back on the engine she was sitting on the box on my side. "Have you any objection to my riding on this side a little way? I am curious to see how you make it go," she asked, in a pretty coaxing way.

"No," I replied, with forced ungraciousness, "you have a right to ride wherever you please."

I knew I was acting like a bear, and was ashamed of it. I asked her awkwardly to excuse my back, and was not pleased by the profusion of her assurances that she didn't mind. I wished I had a clean suit of over-clothes on. I was conscious of a great, black streak of grease on my back. I hadn't been shaved for three days, and I had caught a piece of grit in my right eye, inflaming it until I knew it loomed up like a tail-light in a tunnel.

And the fireman was one of those unaccountable fellows to whom dirt never sticks.

I usually passed the goods train in the siding at Dalton. But this time I was to pass her at Knowlton.

My passenger and the fireman had commenced again where they left off. In pretended solicitude for her comfort, I ill-naturedly closed my front window tight, and roasted her out.

I kept my head doggedly turned and pretended not to know when the fireman assisted her back to his side, where she could ride in comfort.

When I came in sight of Knowlton siding, the goods train's flagman signalled me to come ahead. She had gone in there to let me by. There was but one short siding at Knowlton, which could be entered by a switch at either end.

As there were some trucks in the near end, the goods ran ahead and backed in, pushing the others back far enough to get in clear herself.

I noticed that the truck at my end of the switch was loaded with lumber. I pulled my head in, and tried the gauge-cocks.

I remember hearing a crash, and a snapping of breaking wood, and then I woke on the floor of the guard's van, and looked up into the hazel eyes of my passenger. There was a look of intense pity in them, as she bathed my head, face and neck in cool water. As the car heeled, in rounding a curve, Bill Ditmar, the conductor came up to me.

That seemed to recall me to my senses, and I tried to get up, but my passenger pushed me gently back, talking soothingly.

"Lay still, old man; be quiet," said Bill; "you're all right. Don't try to move."

"What's the matter?" I asked querulously. "What ye doin'? Who slopped this water all over me?"

"Don't you know you're hurt, Joe?"

"Hurt? No. Who hurt me?"

"There was a two-inched spruce plank stickin' out o' a truck o' timber in Knowlton siding; it stripped your side o' the truck off, an' knocked ye off yer perch. The corner o' the sack broke it off, an' it scraped along the whole side o' the train."

"Is that so? Who's runnin' the engine now?"

"The fireman."

"Well, I can't stay here; I must get back on the engine 'fore that red-headed chump——" I tried again to get up, but when I raised my head it became dizzy, things looked black, and it fell wearily back on the pile of old coats.

I awoke in a hospital, where I stayed a month. When I came out the threatened trouble on the line had been settled more or less satisfactorily; my fireman had been promoted, and I had red-headed Allison permanently. If his overwhelming conceit could be kept in check, he wasn't such a bad fellow at all. He tried several times to broach the subject of the lady passenger but as I saw it was merely to dilate on the impression he had made I declined to listen.

By virtue of my office as chief of the local division, I was privileged to lead the grand march at our annual ball. As I had no lady, Jack Burke promised to find me a partner. When he presented me to Miss Lily Effingham, I was delighted, and not a little confused, to recognise my former passenger. Explanations were impossible, so I just brazened it out. I was shaved now, and togged up, so I was more at ease than on our first meeting.

Miss Lily was a splendid dancer, and a bright and sensible girl. We became quite good friends during the evening, and she told me how pleased she had been at seeing me back on the engine.

"How could you have seen me?" I asked in surprise, for I was certain I had not seen her since I lay on the tender floor that day when she bathed my wounds so tenderly.

"Why, I see you every day," she replied; "you pass Uncle John's at a quarter past ten, and I always see you go by."

At ten fifteen I was due at the top of a heavy grade at Gregory's Mills. Gregory lived on the summit of the hill. As chairman of the railway men's club,

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I had worked like a Trojan for his election. I had become personally acquainted with him, and knew him to be a genial and hearty old fellow. I had not seen him since his election.

"Is he with us this evening?" I asked.

"Why, yes; haven't you seen him? There he is, with Mrs. Larrabee, over there."

We strolled over to where Mr. Gregory was entertaining the superintendent's wife. Miss Lily was about to introduce me, when he interrupted her with:

"Oh, I know Mr. Franklin. We are fellow-soldiers in the good cause. Mrs. Larrabee, permit me——"

"Not necessary, Mr. Gregory; I, too am acquainted with Mr. Franklin. He is one of our engine-drivers, you know. I have ridden a great many miles behind him."

We formed a party, in a corner, and I, for one, passed a remarkably pleasant evening.

"By-the-way, Mr. Franklin," said Gregory, as we shook hands at parting, "I want to see you about the expenses of the club; can't you run over to the house some evening next week? We are alone, Lily and I and will try and make it pleasant for you."

I glanced at her inquiringly. Seconded by her, the invitation would become a command to be obeyed.

"Wednesday evening we shall be at home. Will that be convenient for you, Mr. Franklin?" she said, with, I fancied, a slightly conscious flush on her face.

On Wednesday evening, which was perfectly convenient for me, Gregory met me at the door with a cordial welcome. Miss Lily received me with gracious hospitality in the large, old-fashioned parlour.

Ten fifteen became the most interesting moment in the whole twenty-four hours to me now. I never missed the flutter of a dainty handkerchief at the corner window of the old mansion, nor failed to return the signal. As I had to pound her pretty hard to get up the grade, the fireman was too busy to see what was going on.

Early the next autumn it was rumoured about that our superintendent of motive power was about to leave and that the chief of the middle division was to get his place. That would leave a vacancy for which there would be no lack of candidates, and the man with most influence would get it. I had no hesitation in invoking Gregory's aid. Here was a chance, if he wished to do something for me.

He asked me but one question: "Are you competent to fill the position?"

"Undoubtedly," I replied; "otherwise I would not have asked for your assistance."

He told me to leave the matter to him, and keep perfectly "mum."

When the change was finally made, several persons who had confidently asserted themselves as being sure of the appointment were wonderfully taken aback by the unexpected promotion of John Franklin.

Three months later, with Lily's permission, I tackled Gregory. He admitted that he had been expecting it, and was not displeased; "but, Joe," said he, laying both hands on my shoulders, and looking me squarely in the eyes; "I want you to prove yourself. Come to me a year from the day you were promoted, and if you still hold your position, she is yours."

I thought the terms hard, but railway men learn to wait long and be patient. With Lily's help and encouragement the nine months passed—it doesn't seem long now—and the old gentleman proved that he was as good as his word.

We had been married a week before I was able to muster courage to ask what she thought of me that day on the engine.

"I thought," said she, with a bewitching pout, "that you were the crossest bear I had ever seen, and that I should dearly like to have the taming of you."

"What about Allison?"

"Allison, who is he?"

"That red-headed fireman."

She gazed at me a moment in puzzled wonder, then, suddenly divining where the shoe pinched, she threw her head back, and rippled out a peal of laughter whose genuine heartiness would have swept away the last trace of jealousy from the mind of the most perverted bluebeard that ever lived.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, on regaining her breath, "he was too funny!"

Herbert E. Hamblen.

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JOHNSON'S LOST LEGACY.

JOHNSON'S wife's Aunt Mary, from whom the J's have had (but now cease to have) expectations, paid them a visit recently, and this is the plain unvarnished and truthful account of it all as it was told to me by Johnson himself:

Fat, my boy, well! I've seen a goodish bit in my time but I've never seen anything to equal it, never! Came in a four-wheeler—had to get in sideways and carted the bally thing over to such an angle that the cabby had to take on three chums on the roof to ballast it a bit, and even then he didn't get it straight.

Mary was out and I was up dressing when I heard the growler draw up at our gate. I didn't look out but judged by the heavy crunch of the wheels that it was the beer, and yelled down stairs to Georgina, to tell the man that the last barrel wasn't up to sample and that we should patronise another firm if he couldn't do something better for us.

Georgina went to the door and I was going back to my lather brush when I heard a terrific row out in the front and, rushing to the window, was just in time to see the cabby's three friends flying through space as if they had been shot out of a catapult. They hadn't, of course; they had been shot off the cab, aunty having stepped out and so upset the balance somewhat abruptly. The cabby thought the job would be cheap at half-a-crown, and he said as much; but being wealthy Aunt Mary is of course frugal, and she considered a shilling would be ample payment for the transport.

I felt sorry for the cabby; he struggled manfully to rise to the occasion and do it thorough justice; but he couldn't succeed even though aunty felt constrained to call him an impious, profane wretch and to talk of policemen.

Half Flatwater Terrace gathered round the house, and to save my reputation and Aunt Mary's feelings, I hastily wiped my face, struggled into a coat, and rushed out, overturning the grinning Georgina and interposing my form between cabby and his fare, who by this time was well on towards hysterics and finger-nails.

"Speak to the wretch, Dolphie," said Aunt Mary tearfully. "He wants half-a-crown just for driving me round from the station, and he has been most insulting."

"Has he?" said I meaningly. "Well, come inside—and I'll talk to you in a minute." This last was to the cabby who was about two and a half times my size and had a whip to boot.

Flatwater Terrace isn't adapted for people of my aunt's build, but she got in sideways after Georgina had cleared the hat-stand out of the hall, and I turned to the cabman.

He was inclined to be vicious and show fight when I asked very loud indeed what he meant by it; but he winked knowingly and smiled when I added *sotto-voce*, extending the disputed two bob, "put this away and hook it."

Aunt Mary had brought her pet cat, a vicious old tom, with her, and she had come, she said, for a fortnight. I said it was exceedingly kind of her, and longed fervently for Mary to come back.

In the meantime, Aunt Mary sat down abruptly on her niece's favourite wicker chair to rest before going upstairs to remove her things. I and Georgina helped her up again; but the chair was hopelessly done for—flat as a pancake. I told aunt it was of no consequence, but she evidently wasn't thinking of the chair, and she said somewhat stiffly that at her time of life such shocks were apt to be serious, and she wondered at Mary filling her house up with such flimsy rubbish. I said I was a bit surprised at it myself. As a matter of fact, the house itself was a bit flimsy, I pointed out, and I told the old

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geezer that we hoped by diligent application to grow older and bigger and so to fit ourselves to fill something more roomy and substantial.

Really I was annoyed about that chair; it had held us both comfortably (at different times, I mean, of course) often and often, and it had got associated in our minds with the early days of our marriage. Had Peterkins been underneath it when the crash came I could have welcomed the catastrophe, despite the rupture of sweet memories that it entailed; but there was no such luck. Peterkins was out in the kitchen sampling the cutlets that were preparing for our dinner, and Peterkins' method of sampling foodstuffs doesn't leave much residue for the least fastidious mortal to dine upon.

Peterkins was a holy terror. Aunt Mary had had the dear thing for six years, and during that time she had stuffed the bloated beast out to a miniature of her own unweildy proportions and petted it into the most vicious, spiteful, thieving brute that ever disgraced its race.

Georgina broke the loss of our dinner to us in her own crude fashion, bursting into the dining-room, where Mary and her Aunt had settled after the first affecting greetings, to discuss the remote days (nearly three years back) when Mary had been finishing out her course of maidenhood under the direction of her fat relative.

"Oh, please mum, the cat's been and nicked the chops," said Georgina, who's of cockney birth and West Ham breeding.

"Done what, Georgina?" queried Mary stiffly.

"Nicked the chops, mum. There's two blooming bones and a grease spot on the table cloth left of 'em," said Georgina, not without a certain exhibition of grieved dignity.

"Oh, I do hope they were fresh, Mary," ejaculated Aunty. "The poor dear is not used to common butcher's meat, and I'm afraid it will be bad for him."

"Pity it took them, then," said I. "I am, and I could have done with a couple of those chops without turning a feather. As it is, I suppose we may have a bone apiece, while Georgina banquets on the grease spot. Good old Peterkins!"

Aunt Mary glared at me in stony disapproval, and Mary suggested sweetly but with a secret underlying emphasis that I had better go and get on with my work. I went!

During the first week Aunty did for quite a respectable portion of our household goods and chattels by sitting on them unexpectedly before they had time to brace themselves up for the shock. She sat all over the place, even on my shaving-mug, and wherever she sat, ruin followed.

She went through two chairs besides the wicker one the first day, and in the night I dreamt of earthquakes and gas explosions only to find on investigation that Aunt Mary had gone through the spare-room bed.

It was an awkward sort of misadventure, because she didn't go completely through but was held in eminent danger of being throttled by the head and feet, and was only rescued in the nick of time by Mary and Georgina and a crowbar. I believe, though Mary was reticent about the details, that one levered her up while the other introduced cushions and mattresses and things below her until they got her on a level again and allowed her to roll off on to the floor and spend the rest of the night in hysterical revilings of us and our furniture.

Peterkins wasn't a bad second, but *his* talent for destruction lay principally amongst the crockery and foodstuffs.

It was a lucky thing for him that he had selected a wealthy mistress. We should have been within measurable reach of the workhouse if we had had to keep him for a month. But a cat who can eat a mackerel or so for breakfast, a fowl for lunch, and the remains of a cold joint of beef for supper, with odd meals of canary and pigeon in between, isn't intended for the homes of mere inkslingers. Nabobs and wealthy widows alone can aspire to the joys of such companionship.

Peterkins it was who added to the burden of Aunt Mary's presence, and it was Peterkins who relieved us of it, and of the last lingering hope of sharing in the wealth that helped to console its mistress's relatives for the connection.

Without her money Aunt Mary would have been superfluous—with it she was merely a nuisance. And this was how it came about!

Aunt Mary went off one fine morning to visit a cousin on the other side of London—Aunt Mary was provincial, and she used our house as a sort of centre, thereby killing all the necessary birds with one stone, so to speak.

She left Peterkins behind her, giving Mary strict injunctions to guard it closely and tenderly, dieting it with care and judgment, and on no account to forget its warm milk at eleven and its cutlet at one. Now Peterkins, as I have already hinted, was partial to pigeon *au natural*, and it retrieved them mostly from the man at the back, who was a fancier, and devoted considerable time and money to his hobby.

I was in town when it happened, and when I got back I found Mary in tears and distress. Peterkins was dead!

Only an unreasonable old woman such as Aunt Mary could have expected or suggested that Mary should become nurse to a beast of a cat and spend the whole day in running round after it to see that it came to no harm.

But shortly before twelve she did happen to remember it, and missing it from all its accustomed haunts indoors and, ominous sight! finding the dinner joint untouched, she went out into the garden to call it.

Before she could reach the back-door, the sharp crack of a revolver broke the solemn stillness of our suburban caterpillar parades, and shortly afterwards the *corpus* of Peterkins came flying over the back wall and landed into my cucumber frame.

With all a woman's tender pity, Mary gathered up the fragments that remained (of the cat. I mean, not the cucumber frame) and wept over them before she got out her best bonnet and went round to tell Jenkins what she thought of him.

Jenkins is a gentleman, and, despite the galling evidence of the feathers and fluff of three of his most valuable pigeons that he had to show in extenuation of his crime, he apologised contritely, and abjectly allowed the torrents of wrath to pour over him with only the mutest of protests. Mary showed him not the slightest mercy. Under the stimulating influence of the idea of her own neglect and her Aunt's sorrow and anger, she called him everything appropriate and inappropriate that her mind could suggest, from a cowardly assassin to a cold-blooded murderer, and she threatened him with me and the magistrates and whosoever else came handiest.

I went round, of course. I had to! Jenkins was out. I was glad to discover, and when I returned I found that a slight reprieve in the shape of a telegram from

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Aunt Mary announcing that she had arranged to stay all night (and bidding us to take care of Peterkins and allow him to sleep in our room because of his nerves) had been granted us.

Peterkins slept in the dust-bin—I placed him there with my own fair hands and went in to administer what consolation I could to Mary.

"Hang Aunt Mary and her wretched cat, any way," said I. "Let's have a comfortable supper and make believe that the house is ours for a change. We'll face the music to-morrow when it starts to tune up. Until then we might very well go back to our original state and enjoy life as we did before it became overweighted with Peterkins and his fat owner."

"She'll never forgive us," sobbed Mary.

"That's an affliction, truly," said I; "but we'll continue to exist even then."

"Couldn't we match it?" queried Mary late in the evening. She made brave efforts, but the dead cat out in the dust-bin weighed heavily on her spirits, and she harped on it continually.

"Impossible," said I, "you could sooner match Aunt Mary; such another fat, ugly beast doesn't anywhere exist in the whole kingdom. Of that I am well assured, and I fervently trust that my assurance is justified."

"Well you *will* go and see that man and make it uncomfortable for him," implored Mary.

"Rather," said I with grim determination. And in the morning I went.

"Mr. Jenkins," said I. "You shot my Aunt's cat and threw the body over into our garden again."

"Ye-s-s," he stammered. "I—er—that is, you know, it was killing my pigeons wholesale and——"

"Then lend us your hand," said I, cutting him short. "I admire you immensely. It's what I have been wanting to do for the past week and haven't had the courage. I'm proud of you. Lend us your hand again."

"But," said he in surprise. "Your wife intends to take out a summons against me."

"Not she," said I. "There, lend us that hand once more if you don't mind. That's a thing I should have to do and I'll hedge, you bet. But why on earth didn't you drop the carcase into your ash-pail and make a complete job of it? You couldn't manage to shoot the old woman as well, I suppose?"

Jenkins thought not, and I didn't press it on him.

"Well," said Mary when I returned. "Did you give it to the wretch?"

Mary's question was somewhat vague; but I perfectly understood what she meant, and I answered her diplomatically to the effect that I had made Jenkins thoroughly aware of the light in which I regarded the slaughter of Auntie's favourite cat. I added with perfect truth that Jenkins seemed more concerned about it than I did—he could hardly have been less.

About the affair of the summons I had to interpose; but I got Mary round to taking a rational view of the affair by pointing out that summonses cost money and time and much ill-feeling and dissatisfaction, and as we had in all probability lost whatever chance we might have stood of inheriting her Aunt's money, it wasn't much sense to go and throw all these things away after it.

At the thought of her shattered hopes, Mary's tears flowed afresh. We had planned a move when that melancholy event came off, to a modestly designed residence twenty miles out, with furnishings and appointments to match, and to lose it all over a diabolical cat *was* galling, I must admit.

"I wish Auntie had sat on the wretched animal," sobbed my wife spitefully. "She would have had it safe enough then."

"Eureka!" said I, jumping up and waltzing round the apartment in the glee of a sudden brilliant idea. "Aunty *shall* sit on Peterkins. She shall assassinate her own sweet pet afresh, and our sympathy shall be with Auntie even while we lament the cat. Mary, that's the best idea you have had for a long while!"

I went out and got the corpse of Peterkins and dusted it a bit, and then we deposited it on the seat of my big leather arm-chair, which Aunt Mary had appropriated as being the only one in which she felt she could trust herself with anything like security. I dropped an antimacassar over the remains and fled, leaving the plot to develop. Things went very well for us! Aunt Mary come home perturbed and irritable. A rude cabman called her a fat old cow in return for his fare, which was strictly legal as per usual, and advised her to patronise Pickford for the future.

"Did you ever?" said she in excited indignation dropping into the chair in a way which must have effectually settled Peterkins had he not been already comfortably settled.

We said we never did, and we never did, you know.

"Peterkins," said I, ten minutes later, in response to a whole string of questions regarding the welfare of that unhappy beast. "Oh, he's about somewhere. I saw him in here just before you came back."

Mere words fail to do justice to the situation when the tragedy was discovered. There was a suggestive flatness about the corpse that carried conviction to Aunt Mary's mind, and to our great relief she accepted the circumstantial evidence we had so elaborately prepared without a question, and blamed herself in heart-broken accents for the death of her pet.

"The poor dear," she sobbed. "He shall be stuffed and have the handsomest case I can procure for him."

I glanced at Mary and Mary dispatched mental telegraphs back at me.

"Better let me bury him, Aunt," I ventured to suggest "I can cut you off a wing or a foot for a keepsake—or the tail now! With an ebony handle and silver trimmings that would make a lovely memento, and in the summer you will find it useful as well to keep the flies off the Sunday joint. Or you could——"

"Thank you, Dolph," interrupted Aunt Mary stiffly; "but I prefer my own plan, and if you will put poor Peterkins away for the night I shall be greatly obliged. I will get you to see about the matter in the morning."

We put Peterkins in the meat-safe for the time being. I was for burying him; but Mary refused to allow it, and of course the silly cat-stuffer Aunt Mary went to gave the whole show away at the first go off—said what a shame it was to shoot such a splendid animal right before my face. Aunt Mary went into a fit on the shop floor, and crumpled up five pounds' worth of show cases and specimens, which served the old fool jolly well right. But it didn't help us any way, and when she came straight back, packed her luggage, and caught the midday express home again, we didn't need the icy little note that the postman left with us the next morning to inform us that our hopes had

"Folded their tents like Arabs
And silently stole away."

R. Andom

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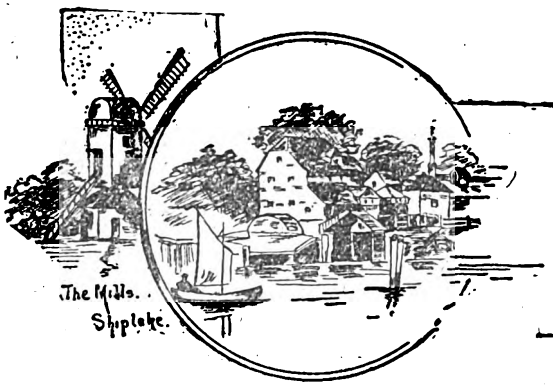

THE CHARITY BAZAAR.

IT was at a church bazaar, and he had come there at the request of his "cousin," who was at the head of the flower stall. He opened the door bashfully, and stood, hat in hand, looking at the brilliant scene before him, when a young lady rushed up, and, clutching him by the arm, said:

"Oh! you must, you will take a chance in our cake. Come over here. This way."

Blushing to the roots of his hair, he stammered out that he "really didn't have the pleasure of knowing——"

"Oh! that's all right," said the young lady. "You'll know me better before you leave. I'm one of the managers, you understand. Come, the cake will be all taken if you don't hurry." And she almost dragged him over to one of the middle stalls. "There, now, only half-a-crown a slice, and you may get a gold ring. You had better take three or four slices; it will increase your chances, you know."

"You're very good," he stammered. "But I'm not fond of cake; that is, I haven't any use for the ring—I——"

"Ah, that will be ever so nice," said the young lady, "for now if you get the ring you can give it back, and we'll put it in another cake."

"Y-e-e-s," said the young man with a sickly smile. "To be sure, but——"

"Oh, there isn't any but about it," said the young lady, smiling sweetly. "You know you promised."

"Promised?"

"Well, no, not exactly that; but you will take just one slice?" and she looked her whole soul into his eyes.

"Well, I suppose——"

"To be sure. There is your cake," and she slipped a great slice into his delicately-gloved hands, as he handed her half-a-sovereign in gold.

"Oh, that is too nice," added the young lady, as she plastered three more pieces of cake on top of the one she had just given him. "I knew you would take at least four chances," and his half-sovereign disappeared across the table, and then she called to a companion; "Oh, Miss Larkins, here is a gentleman who wishes to have his fortune told."

"Oh, does he? Send him over," answered Miss Larkins.

"I beg your pardon, but I'm afraid you're mistaken. I don't remember saying anything about——"

"Oh, but you will," said the first young lady, tugging at the youth's arm. "It's for the good of the church, and you won't refuse," and once more the beautiful eyes looked soulfully into his. "Here we are. Now take an envelope; open it. There, you are going to be married in a year. Isn't that jolly? A shilling, please." This time the youth was careful to hand out the exact amount.

"Oh, I should like to have my fortune told. May I?" said the first young lady.

"Of course you may, my dear," said Miss Larkins, handing out one of her envelopes. "Oh, dear, you are going to be married this year, too! A shilling more, please," and the poor youth came down with half-a-crown. "We have no change, sir," added Miss Larkins, putting it in her pocket.

"Oh, come, let's try our weight," said the first young lady, once more tugging at the bashful youth's coat sleeve, and before he knew where he was, he found himself standing on the platform of the machine. "One hundred and thirty-two," said the young lady. "Oh, how I would like to be a great, heavy man like you," and she jumped on the machine like a bird. "One hundred and eighteen. Well, that is light. One shilling, please."

"What," said the youth, "one shilling! Isn't that pretty steep? I mean, I——"

"Oh, but you know," said the young lady, "it is for charity," and another shilling was added to the treasury of the bazaar.

"I think I'll have to go. I have an engagement at——"

"Oh, but first you must buy me a bouquet for taking you all round," said the young lady. "Over here," and they were soon in front of the flower stall.

"Here is just what I want," and the young lady picked up a basket of roses and violets. "Ten shillings, please."

"Oh, Jack, is that you?" cried the youth's "cousin" from behind the flower counter, "and buying flowers for Miss Giggle, too. Oh, I shall be terribly jealous unless you buy me a basket, too," and she picked up an elaborate affair. "Fifteen shillings, please, Jack," and the youth put down the money, looking terribly confused and much as though he didn't know whether to make a bolt for the door or give up all hope and settle down in despair.

"You'll excuse me, ladies," he stammered; "but I must go; I have——"

"Here, let me pin this in your buttonhole," interrupted his "cousin." "Five shillings, please," and then the youth broke away and made a straight line for the door.

"Well, if ever I visit another bazaar may I be kicked," he ejaculated, as he counted over the cash to see if he had the train fare to ride home.

H. T. P.

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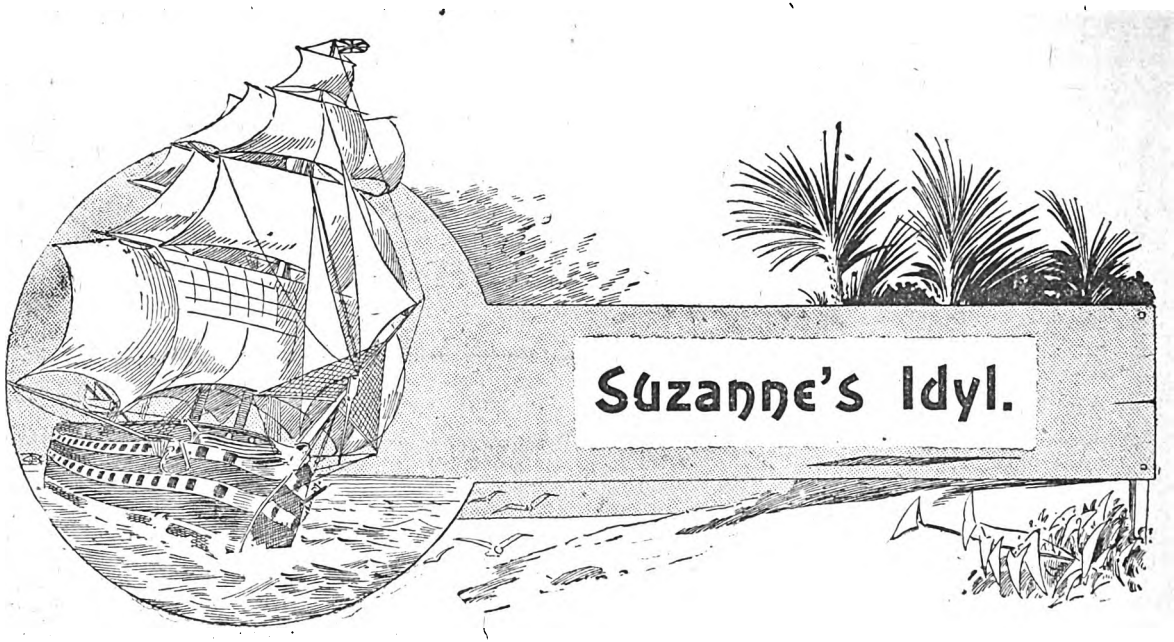

Suzanne's Idyl.

"It is so tiresome in the country," said pretty Suzanne; "no amusement, no diversion. My father is cruel to make us pass three long months of the year in this place! If our castle were lost in the mountains! If we only ran some risk in living in it! I long for adventures."

Albert de Sennepont listened to his cousin in surprise.

What a queer temperament! She made him uneasy—this young girl whom he thought of marrying.

Did he love her?

He hardly knew; but there were certain facts concerning which he was not in ignorance—namely, that she was very rich, that he himself was poor, and that his mother, sister of the wife of M. de Saint-Hérem, was of opinion that he would have difficulty in making a better match.

Madame de Saint-Hérem had been dead three years. Then Madame de Sennepont, who had just lost her husband, had installed herself with her brother-in-law, in order to bestow her care on Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem, just in her sixteenth year. And she had formed the project of marrying her son to her niece.

But Suzanne did not evince any overwhelming anxiety to captivate her cousin, and he also was lukewarm at times. Still, Madame de Sennepont did not remain inactive. Everything that she could do that her niece might love her son, she tried.

Alone with Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem, she continually sang the praises of Albert. But is it, indeed, very certain that men without faults are always to the taste of young girls?

Certainly, Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem had some affection for Albert. Was he not her cousin? She loved him as one does the son of one's aunt, the nephew of one's father. But that seemed to be all.

And, with no suspicion of the projects of Madame de Sennepont and Albert, she made her cousin the confidant of her dreams. He was obliged to listen to the most romantic confessions of the young girl. She ingenuously declared to him that she would be happy to marry a man who would carry her off, as they do in all the tales of chivalry.

"But, my dear cousin," cried Albert, "such things are not done now! A young girl who allows herself to be carried off dishonours her family, and offends society."

"Well," replied Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem; "I want my adventure. Don't talk to me of a commonplace marriage! I read the other day the story of a society woman who, while on a walk, found herself suddenly among brigands. These wretches made ready to despoil her of her jewels; suddenly the chief of the brigands appeared; he was a gentleman who had become a bandit through misfortune.

"Perceiving the young woman, he recognised her, for he had often met her in drawing-rooms in former times. He threw himself at her feet, asked her pardon, and had her set at liberty: but—see how well all things fit in! This gentleman was the very one whom the young woman had loved; and, seeing him again, she felt her passion reawaken; she then extended her hand to the young man, and confessed to him her love, and they were married. Isn't that fine?"

"The deuce!" thought Albert. "If I want her, I must do something dramatic, skilfully prepared, in which I run no risk, and which will give me the appearance of an opera-hero. A very romantic episode!—night, lightning, thunder, brigands-in-jest and I myself arriving just in time to rescue the princess in danger. An affair of that kind might be managed, after all."

For some days the village in which the Saint-Hérem castle stood had been agitated by the arrival of a band of gypsies—half Spanish, half Italian.

The men were small and strong; but among them was here and there, one whose face, in spite of privations and fatigue, kept a kind of proud beauty beneath the hat of crumpled felt and the thin hair.

On what did they live? On alms; on strange remedies sold to peasants; on acrobatic tricks performed in the open air, on a carpet stretched in the dust of the road.

On the evening of the day on which the above conversation took place, Albert de Sennepont directed his steps toward the gypsies' camp. It was not without

some apprehension that he approached; but these poor people did not look like criminals; they were evidently more unfortunate than wicked.

The one who appeared to be in command came to meet Albert as soon as he saw him. What could this person of distinguished mien want of them?

Albert took him apart, and talked with him; and very soon, the face of the gypsy revealed first a swift grimace of surprise, then an expression of unbounded joy. The poor wretch smiled, his eyes twinkled, and, by little nods of the head, he acquiesced in all that Albert was saying.

Oh! it was very simple. It was only a pretended plot against the safety of Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem, which they discussed quite pleasantly.

The young girl took frequent horseback rides, often not returning to the castle until night. The gypsies would group themselves on the road in her way, and make a feint of assaulting her, and then Albert would appear and put them to rout.

"If, after that," thought the young man, "my cousin does not become literally crazy over me, then I shall no longer have any reason to hope!"

There was at first a little hesitation on the part of the chief, but Albert reassured him and arranged all the details.

On the morrow Suzanne, mounted on her favourite horse, went to explore the country round about the castle.

The day was splendid. Absorbed in thought, the young girl gave herself up to the guidance of her horse. She found herself in some woods, in paths but slightly worn, and she was breathing with pleasure the healthy scents of the forest.

When she came out of her reverie, the sun was setting. The weather had changed. Heavy clouds traversed the heavens, announcing a storm. The young girl urged her horse to a gallop.

She had just emerged from the forest, and was following the hollow, when she heard cries and saw shadows moving a few paces off. Her horse reared, and people of terrific aspect rose suddenly before her. Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem, greatly frightened, cried out loudly, and lashed the face of one of her assailants with her whip. But they pressed round her, menacing, furious.

Happily, at this moment, a man with a gun in his hand ran up from the forest.

"Wretches!" he cried, bounding towards the pseudo bandits.

The latter, on his arrival, fled precipitately.

"What! is it you, my dear cousin?" asked the newcomer.

"Albert!" cried Suzanne.

"Yes. I! and I have come in good time, I think! Without my intervention, these brigands would have given you trouble."

Mademoiselle had already recovered from her fright.

"Do you think so?" she asked, smiling.

"Undoubtedly! These gypsies are dreadful people; but they knew that I would have no pity, and, rather than struggle with me, they judged it prudent to retreat."

After his return to the castle, Albert gave himself up to joyful meditation. Surely, he was nearing the day of triumph. During the night his cousin would think of nothing but the danger to which she had been exposed, and the courageous intervention of Albert.

He had agreed that, not to worry M. de Saint-Hérem, the adventure of the evening should not be mentioned to him.

After dinner, Albert went to his room, and, having lain down, began to dream of the hour in which his cousin should throw herself into his arms, crying, like Doña Sol, in *Hernani*, "You are my hero!"

What, then, was his astonishment the next morning on learning that Suzanne had already had her horse saddled, and had set out for a ride!

"Her adventure of yesterday has not frightened her, then!" thought Albert; and he became a little uneasy. But he was reassured when he saw Mademoiselle returning. Hastening towards her, he cried out:

"So early, cousin? and may I ask where you come from?"

Mademoiselle, leaning on the arm which her cousin extended to her, lightly leapt to the ground.

"Ah, cousin," said she, "I am very unhappy."

"What has happened?"

"The most frightful thing!"

"But what?"

"Ah, well! this. I have no secrets from you. It is very serious. You must know that all night I was thinking of my adventure, of the gypsies, of their attack. And the face of one of them has not ceased to occupy my mind—a face at once charming and proud, the face that I have always given to the hero of my dreams. And with that a superb manner under his tattered garb. And this gypsy smiled on me, and he looked as if he would ask my pardon for having attacked me, and, my faith! I would smile on him in return."

"Ah! bah!" cried Albert.

"It is as I tell you! Isn't it foolish? To allow myself to be smitten by the smile of a wretch who would have killed me!"

"Thoroughly foolish, cousin."

"And what is more so is that this morning I wished to see my gypsy again. I said to myself that I should have no peace until I met him again. So I set out for the encampment, and there I found my hero!"

"And then!"

"And then,—I called him, as you stand there!"

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing. He had a pretty bouquet of flowers in his hand, and he held it out to me. See! Here it is."

And Mademoiselle took from her corsage a bouquet of spring flowers.

"It is an idyl!" said Albert ironically, a little out of countenance.

"Pure madness, I tell you!" cried the young girl. "To love a gypsy! to love a bandit! What a misfortune for me!"

Albert was quite pale.

"Think! you are not serious, cousin!"

"Very serious," she replied, in a decided tone, tapping the ground with her little foot: "I will have no other husband than this gypsy."

"But this is impossible!"

"Or, if I cannot belong to the man of my dreams, I will never marry!"

Albert did not see fit to continue the struggle. Decidedly his cousin was not for him. Two days after, he went back to Paris.

"When you write to Albert," said Mademoiselle de Saint-Hérem to her aunt, "do not forget to recommend him to choose his accomplices better another time. I strongly suspected something, and the gypsies, whom I questioned, did not show themselves brilliant by discretion. They had attacked me for three twenty-franc pieces; for four, they gave me the name of the one who arranged this pretty comic-opera scene."

VIVYAN MATTERS.

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FOURTH INSTALMENT.

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey. Being mounted on a superior horse the refugee easily shakes off his wretched companions, and at a later period assists two ladies in escaping from a band of thieves. Geoffrey is hospitably entertained by a Welsh farmer, and on resuming this journey he encounters a handsomely dressed Welshman. The latter upbraids the English, and they fight with swords. At a critical moment the duel is stopped by the young girl whom Geoffrey had assisted, and who turns out to be no other than his own cousin. The refugee is welcomed by his uncle, with whom he stops. Geoffrey and his cousins Enid and Owain set out on an errand of mercy and are chased by "The Red Men."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIGHT IN THE HALL.

AFTER the attack upon Fron, and our meeting with them in Cwm Cul, the Red Men of the Dusk vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared. Every day my uncle waited eagerly for fresh news of their movements, but none came, and, little by little, as will happen when one's attention has been strained keenly to no effect, the thought of them almost passed from my mind.

It was full three weeks later when, one day, about four o'clock of a bitterly cold afternoon it began to snow in small, slow flakes out of a black and lowering sky. Almost with the first flakes came a very vivid flash of lightning, and a great peal of thunder, and within a short time a furious storm was raging. Surely no summer tempest ever saw lightning dart more sharply, or heard more deafening crashes from the sky, and through it all the snow fell, not heavily, but steadily.

There is something in my blood which does not permit me to be still when such turmoils are raging. Were I compelled to remain without moving from one spot I believe I should chafe myself to death and so, after my usual custom, I moved from window to window, watching the storm as well as the gathering darkness permitted. This uneasiness is a family trait for my uncle was equally disturbed, and was pacing his library end to end, his books thrown on one side, and returning only a pettish, snarling answer when spoken to. Enid was above stairs in her own room, and Owain, whom the weather did not disturb, was seated comfortably by the fire, fitting a new rowel into a spur.

As it happened, I went out into the hall, and found the man who was charged to watch the door—for my uncle kept someone on guard always—trying to light a large, clumsy lamp which hung there. Although the lamp had been made of a considerable bigness yet the bungling workman had contrived but a small door to it, so the man was thrusting in two fingers and between them a piece of glowing turf, upon which he blew to kindle the wick.

As I stood there, smiling to see the unconcern with which he handled naked fire, his horny fingers, I supposed, being almost devoid of sense, he looked up and caught my eye just as the wick smoked, and then flared brightly. I nodded to him in token of his triumph, and he, having no English, yet seeing plainly what I meant, touched his forehead in salute, and smiled all over his broad, simple face.

At that moment, there came in regular order the taps upon the door which my uncle had arranged that those belonging to the house should use after nightfall. The man went to a grating, drew back the panel, and peered out, and I went also and glanced over his shoulder. The night had so far fallen that he might have peered in vain, had not the sky opened with a broad sheet of flame. By the light of the flash a man was seen, bareheaded, and no sign of weapons about him, raising his hand as if to knock

again, and looking like one who had been a short distance on an errand.

Satisfied with his survey, the doorkeeper, slowly and leisurely, slipped back the ponderous bolts and drew the door a little open. He glanced round to see who would enter when a sudden, shining sweep of steel leapt upon him from without, and a keen axe fastened to a pikestaff clove his skull through and through. With a choking groan, the man who, the moment before, had smiled in my face like a child, rolled across my feet, and with his fall the door was hurled back, when, as silently as a hawk swoops, the Red Men of the Dusk sprang in at me.

An instinctive movement had already placed my sword in my hand, and I met the leader with the point, lunging with the play of my whole weight and strength. Meeting no bone the sword went through his naked body as if I had thrust at a curtain, and he dropped on the threshold. At the same time, though I knew it not at the moment, I gave a piercing cry, which rang to every corner of the house. I plucked back my dripping sword, warded a pike head thrust at my breast, cut, thrust, warded again, and thanks to the press in which my enemies had wedged themselves at the door, every man striving to enter first, held them steadily for the instant that was required to bring Owain to my side. His blade flashed past my shoulder and plunged swiftly again and again into the medley of axe and spear heads aimed confusedly at us. Not a single shot so far had been fired, and the only sound was the sharp clash and grate of cold steel.

I was dragged from among the tangle of feet.

Behind us, I heard a bell clamour out its shrill alarm, my uncle's voice screaming orders and the clatter of feet as the garrison ran to arms.

Before us, the half-naked savages, their eyes gleaming like sparks under their fells of matted red hair pushed against us in a dreadful silence like wild beasts too ferocious to utter a single warning ere they attack. It was but for a few moments that they impeded each other by their tangled huddling in the doorway, then a great voice which we both knew called on them from behind, and several fell back affording their comrades room to play their pikes.

But the delay had given us a backing of five or six stout fellows who swarmed up to the defence with sword and buckler. Up to this we had had but the light of the smoky lamp but now the storm burst forth afresh and much nearer. Great sheets of violet flame leapt from end to end of the sky, and seemed to burst in lambent floods through doorway and windows, the thunder followed instant upon the flash, and fighting with our faces to the storm, we were almost blinded by the dreadful glare followed by the inky blackness of the night closing over it.

With the second flash the voice of Ieuan Gwyllt rang out again, and the pikemen, agile as wild cats, strong as mountain bulls, charged furiously upon us. The superior reach of their weapons now told, and though, once and again in the glancing light, I put aside a pike head with my sword, a third reached me, took me in the side, and thrust me down headlong. Our men now closed over my body, opposing their bucklers to the points, and hewing furiously at the bare heads of the Gwylliard Cochion. I felt two hands twist themselves into my collar, and I was dragged from among the tangle of feet before I could turn myself to rise.

"Are you hurt?" cried Owain, in my ear.

"A mere scratch," said I, springing up. "The point caught in my doublet."

"Then we will fall back and guard the stair foot," said Owain. "They have the entrance, the other they must never have."

"Never," said I, and we hastened back.

The stairs ran up midway of the hall and facing the door. At the top of the first flight was a square gallery, and here was gathered a screaming band of women, clinging to each other, and now looking upon, now turning their heads from the medly of fight at the entrance. Enid, her faithful Siani close at hand, stood resolutely at the stair-rail; as we fell back, we waved our hands, and a white smile shone on her face.

We placed ourselves at the stair-foot and a shrill cry of delight broke out behind us. I turned my head and saw my uncle two or three steps up.

"Stand to it, nephew," he cried, "and beat them off. And yet," he added, and his tone now seemed one of chagrin, "I saw you fall."

"'Twas but a slip," said I, and glanced his way. The sky opened as I did so, and the murky, yellow-lighted place was filled with a glare beyond noonday. My uncle was biting his thumb and looking down upon me darkly. Owain began to shout commands in Welsh. Two men armed with muskets were darting up and down on the edges like terriers round a badger hole watching for a chance to help their fellows with shot. At Owain's call they ran back to him and he posted them on the gallery above and gave them orders. All this, which has taken some time in telling, took but little in the doing, and through it all the battle raged, on our side with great shouts and heavy cries, on the other

with a silence and mute ferocity, inexpressibly dreadful. I lifted my eyes and saw Miss Vaughan leaning over the rail. Our glances met and she spoke, her clear voice coming easily to my ears through the tumult.

"Are you hurt, Master Heathcote?" said she.

"Not in the least," I laughed back; "I was but pushed down."

"Ah!" cried Owain at my side. I turned my head and saw that our men were giving little by little, and now there appeared breaking his way easily through the fight the tall, sinewy form of Ieuan Gwyllt. To him this was mere play. He intercepted cut, thrust, stab and repaid

I pitched forward into a little ditch.

them with deadly interest, as a man might hew his way through a crowd of children. He was eagerly glancing from side to side and the first noise upon their side of the battle was the roar of dreadful joy he gave when he saw Sir Arthur on the stairs.

"Owain—neph——" began the latter in a tone of extreme entreaty, but his voice died away in his throat. We grasped our swords tighter and the muskets began to thunder over our heads. The garrison was being steadily driven back, and there was now room to fire over them into the mass of Red Men of the Dusk still in the doorway. The stifling smell of powder filled the air, the reports of the guns in the confined space were even more stunning than the thunder which rolled without, and my uncle began to scream in Welsh to the musketeers.

I could distinguish nothing but the word "Ieuan," but his meaning was easy enough to take. He was bidding them mark down Ieuan Gwyllt, but Ieuan was now in the midst of our own men, and they were as likely to hit friend as foe.

I searched the landing once more with my eye, and saw the reason of the shots following one on another so closely as they had done. Several spare firelocks were leaning ready to the hands of the men, and were being charged again as soon as fired by Miss Vaughan and Siani. I turned again and saw Ieuan Gwyllt breaking through the last fringe of the skirmish, and rushing upon his prey. He was followed by a gigantic Red Man of the Dusk, whom I had observed in the fight close at Ieuan's back.

"I'll take Ieuan," said I. "You take the big man."

"No, no," said Owain, but chance settled it as I had said. My uncle, had posted himself behind me, having seen me beat Owain once or twice at friendly trials of fence, and Ieuan darted for him. I sprang out to meet him, and our swords clashed together once more. Ieuan's eyes were mere holes in his head through which white flames peered, he churned his teeth like a wild boar so that his great, red beard was all beslavered with foam, his nostrils were black and wide, and he was deadly cool.

"Stand away," said he holding my point easily as before, "and give me that bad old man behind you, and we will go from the house, yes, everyone."

My uncle was beyond speech. He was uttering small odd noises, like a wild animal caught in a gin.

I made the only reply possible to Ieuan's offer, and that was to engage him more desperately than ever. He hung back for a moment watching my wrist, then, with a trick of fence of which I had never seen the like, he plucked my sword from my grip and I heard it tinkle against the roof.

I sprang at him with my naked hands but he dropped his point, clenched his great, hairy fist, and met me with a tremendous blow. It just missed my throat, took me on the breast bone and hurled me backward on the stairs. My uncle fled upwards, screaming, and Ieuan leapt after him, his sword upraised.

With a sharp, brittle sound, a ball from above shattered the sword to pieces near the hilt, and, in his rage, Ieuan flung what remained in his hand at the marksman. The second piece was now laid upon him, and Ieuan, calculating as ever in the midst of his rage, turned and darted back.

The man, fearing to hit one of us, shot wide, and the bullet buried itself in the oaken wainscotting. As Ieuan flew down, I was just scrambling to my feet, and Owain was driving his big opponent before him. In the body of the hall our men were quickly regaining their lost ground, and, looking out upon them, I noticed for the first time that the place was filled with a bright, dancing light shining in redly at the windows.

The cause was in full sight. The lightning had fired an outhouse, which was blazing furiously. As I have said our men were now gaining the upper hand, for the constant shower of balls from the marksmen posted on the gallery both deadly shots, had thinned the ranks of the Red Men of the Dusk. Ieuan ran down the hall, dodged one or two blows aimed at him, caught up a pike from the hands of a man huddled on the flags, and placed himself at the head of his followers. I scrambled for my sword which had fallen within two yards of me and glanced at Owain. At the same instant he looked at me.

"A rush now would break them," he said.

"Ieuan is beginning to draw them off," I answered. It was even so. His band looked strangely reduced though none had been seen to fly, and they were now outnumbered. Making dreadful play with his pike he was moving steadily back. Owain turned his head and shouted to the two men on the gallery. They ceased firing at the enemy and laid their weapons to cover the stair foot.

"Now," cried Owain, and we flung ourselves into the midst of the fray, shouting and slashing our maddest and hardest.

Our advent gave renewed heart to the men of Nant y Bryn. It was like plucking up their spirits with a trumpet and they charged with a mighty shout. For some few minutes the struggle was still waged desperately but now we fought as men fight whose victory is assured; the subtle wine of triumph mounted to our brains and drove us carelessly on the foe. There was no gradual slackening of the battle. The Red Men of the Dusk held their own without flinching till of a sudden, they gave wholly and completely, like a bank of mist before a strong wind and we poured through the

doorway chasing an enemy whose speed made it a folly to pursue. Outside, great sheets of flame were leaping up into the blackness of the dying storm. The fire had spread to a wooden granary but the whole clump was detached and could injure nothing else. The ground was covered with a thin, smooth sheet of snow, taking the gleam of the fire ruddily and making the place light as day. Heated with combat I ran with several others thirty or forty yards from the door upon the heels of the flying foe before I recovered enough sense to desist. To think of catching them was useless, and I stopped and lifted up my face to the grateful cold of the night. Behind me the muskets cracked again and again as shots were fired at the dark figures of the Red Men of the Dusk gliding up the whitened hill. I drew a deep breath and looked round upon the shining scene when a gunshot echoed from the house, and I felt as if a stream of fire were passing across my bare head. A strange weakness came over my limbs, a great buzzing sounded in my ears, and I pitched forward into a little ditch upon the brink of which I had paused.

CHAPTER X.

Who Fired the Shot?

It could only have been a minute or two at the farthest before I came to myself again, yet I seemed to wake out of a deep gulf of unconsciousness. Something warm was trickling down my face, and my head was still singing like a humble-bee. I put a hand up slowly to my cheek and wiped it, then lifted the hand and looked at it. It was covered with blood.

The ditch was so shallow that though my body lay entirely in shadow and darkness, yet I could lift my hand into the shine of the fire. As I did so, a white face was slowly thrust over the edge of the ditch, and I saw Sir Arthur Vaughan peering down at me. His eyes and mouth were wide open, and his features were rigid and drawn, with an expression between horror and expectation, and when he saw the bloody hand raised against him out of the pit, he shrieked fearfully.

With a great effort I sat up, and upon finding that I was assuredly alive, his terror seemed to abate.

"Heathcote! Heathcote!" I heard my name shouted hither and thither in Owain's ringing voice, and just as I began to collect my wits he flew up to the place.

"What has happened?" he cried.

"I am not quite sure," I replied, slowly, "but I fancy a musket-ball has furrowed the top of my head."

"A musket-ball!" said Owain. "Who should fire at you? They had no muskets." He helped me to my feet, and turned to speak to Sir Arthur, but my uncle was slipping back towards the house.

"Did you get into the line of fire?" went on Owain. "Yet that would be strange, for Evan and Mocyn are sure shots and would never lay their pieces towards you."

I could give no help in solving the mystery, and upon reaching the house Owain had too much to do to trouble further in the matter at present. Half a dozen bogwood torches had been hastily lighted and stuck about the hall, and my uncle was now busily engaged in summing up the fight. He seemed to avoid my eye at first, then he lifted his finger and beckoned me. I was now pretty well myself again and I crossed the hall towards him.

"Nephew," said he, in a high, gay voice. "Was ever such luck as this battle? I have lost but three men outright, the others will mend for they are as healthy as hill

The hair was clipped away from the wound.

cattle; we have killed five of these rogues and have their bodies to show, and, do you hear that? I say, do you hear that? There's music for you!" He lifted his finger and listened, with his ear close to the panel of a door near which he stood. At my uncle's elbow was a small man, with keen, twinkling, black eyes, looking as proud as a peacock.

"Shinkin did it. Shinkin did it," cried Sir Arthur in a thin, chuckling voice. "Oh! but I'll thin out their band for them."

He became silent again, listening eagerly, and I listened, too. Pit-pat, pit-pat, soft footfalls were going steadily within. Pit-pat, pit-pat, it sounded, as if a number of gigantic rats were imprisoned there, and was scurrying over the floor with unceasing, unresting haste.

"What have you in there?" I asked.

"Some more of the rogues," cried my uncle in high glee. "They cut off Shinkin in this doorway here, he slipped in, and they streamed after him, a whole string of them, he says.

It was dark inside, and he doubled behind the door, slipped out again, and shot the bolt on them. Oh, noble, noble."

"And can they not escape?" said I.

"Escape!" cried Sir Arthur. "And how? There is no chimney, and the walls are four feet thick. There are two windows to the room, and one door. Here is the door, and the windows are ironed with inch bars. Newgate is no safer."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"Set a guard to watch the room till morning, and then take such measures as may seem best," replied he.

My head was paining me in such a fashion that I now began to feel a little confused, and I turned away and crossed the hall, along which men were already dashing buckets of water to cleanse away the stains of the fight, and went up the stairs. Midway, on the long gallery above I came full upon Enid Vaughan, as she stepped swiftly from a chamber whence came a melancholy groaning as of the wounded. She had a candle in her hand and as the light fell upon me she stopped with a whitened cheek and a sharp cry.

"Oh, Master Heathcote!" she said, and the concern in her voice was sweet to my heart. "What has happened? You are wounded!"

I bethought myself then that my face was daubed with blood, and no comely sight, and I hastened to reassure her.

"It is nothing, Miss Vaughan," I replied, "a graze upon the head from a passing bullet, which has cost me more hair than blood."

"Sit down here," she said, and I sat down obediently on a chair close at hand. She raised her voice then and called on Siani, who came upon the spot and fetched a bowl, and water.

"Indeed," I said, "you give yourself far too much trouble. Had I but a bucket of water to dip my head and face in you would scarce know I had been touched."

But she would not suffer me to escape thus, and, with the help of Siani, the hair was clipped away from the wound, the blood washed off, and a bandage with some healing ointment placed upon it. I felt ashamed to occupy her so long over such a trivial matter, and yet would have been willing to sit thrice as long to feel the play of her soft light fingers about my head. Siani held the candle, and she gazed upon the wound and met my eye more than once with a look of queer mysterious understanding of which at the time I could make nothing.

Miss Vaughan was just making an end of her task when there was a clatter of feet upon the stairs and up bounded Owain.

"I was looking for you, Heathcote," he exclaimed, "but I find you in good hands."

"In most excellent hands," I replied. "I am ashamed to give Miss Vaughan so much trouble for so slight a cause."

"Enid is a soldier's daughter," laughed her brother, "and does not flinch from wounds or the sight of blood. But I am puzzled to know how you came by your hurt. The men declare that they fired every shot up the hill."

"At a time of such tumult and confusion, it is impossible to account for every ball," I returned. "I am thankful it was not an inch lower. I was foolish to pursue fliers so nimble."

A woman who was attending upon the wounded now came to seek directions from Miss Vaughan, and she was called away, receiving my thanks with a smile as she went. Then Sir Arthur called upon Owain to find and set a guard over the prisoners, and I was left alone. I went to my own chamber, and, still feeling somewhat dizzy, lay down, after wrapping my cloak round me, when I soon fell fast asleep.

Upon my awaking, the room was in darkness and the house silent, save for a faint, measured footfall below, that of the guard over the prisoners. I lay staring into the gloom around me for awhile, and then a faint, grey glimmer upon the pane told me that the day was breaking, and I sprang up. I had lain down with my head too confused to think clearly about things. I rose up with the firm conviction, how reached I know not unless in my dreams, that it was my uncle's hand which had fired the shot against me. I went down to the hall and found two men on guard. The day broadened slowly, and the shine of fire and candle from various rooms showed that the household was fully astir. I drew the bolts at the door and stepped out into the cold morning air. The weather had settled down to a keen frost, and a bitter east wind was blowing steadily. A cold, grey sky hung over the bleak outlines of the hills, and somewhere below the house mattocks and spades rang shrilly as a large grave was hewn in the frozen earth for the fallen.

A footstep sounded on the flags before the house, and I turned my head and saw Sir Arthur approaching me. He shivered, and rubbed his hands together as he came.

"How biting, how cruel is the wind!" said he. "Well did the old Welsh call the east wind 'Gwynt Traed y Meirw'—The Wind of the Feet of the Dead. Ah! name of dreadful poesy."

He coughed feebly, and drew his cloak closer about him. He looked so old, so worn, so broken, that a feeling of involuntary pity stirred at my heart; yet the conviction I have mentioned remained unshaken, and I spoke not to him. He made another careless remark, as if he had not observed my silence, and went down to the workmen, while I turned and re-entered the house.

CHAPTER XI.

The Captives.

Upon the conclusion of breakfast I saw Enid Vaughan cast a significent glance towards her brother; I had observed that not once had she spoken to, or even looked in the direction of, Sir Arthur.

"What is to be done with the prisoners shut up there, sir?" asked Owain. "Ought they not to receive food?"

My uncle started as from a reverie, but did not raise his eyes, as he answered: "I have formed my plans for dealing with them and things are in train."

"And what is the first step?"

"To secure them in bonds, that they may do us no further mischief." He rose as he spoke and went from the room. Owain and I followed him at once. He made for the courtyard and by the instant information of Owain, who was uneasy when anything was said in my presence which I did not understand, I was enabled to follow perfectly every incident which now took place.

"Ha!" cried Sir Arthur in a tone of satisfaction, and we saw the two marksmen, Evan and Mocyn, each posted at a window with the muzzle of his piece between the bars, and pointing inwards.

"Are they going to shoot the poor wretches in their prison?" I asked.

"I don't think so," replied Owain, "but I certainly cannot answer for what he is going to do with them."

Owain's tone showed that he put but little faith in my uncle's mercy, and we continued to follow the latter as he walked towards the nearer window.

A glance through the unglazed iron bars showed that the captives were six in number. Bitter as was the season, their nakedness was covered with but a few rags, and they lay on the stone floor of the large, low room as composedly as a man lies on a bed. Four of them were lying down; the other two were leaning against the wall, blinking carelessly at the muskets pointed directly upon them. Mocyn and Evan had watched their opportunity, slipped the guns in at the window, and bidden them remain as they were, offering to shoot the first man that moved. So the pikes, which were their only weapons, save for large, savage knives, lay on the floor as they had placed them, and they slept or stood idly about them, awaiting, with an appearance of perfect unconcern, the pleasure of their captors.

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Sir Arthur counted them over and over again, drawing deep breaths of satisfaction. Then he put his face close to the bars, and began speaking in sharp, clear tones. He made a short speech, and paused. He spoke again, and I recognised the same sounds. He paused once more.

"He is bidding them submit themselved to be pinioned, one at a time, or they shall be shot down as they stand," whispered Owain in my ear. "He is also," and this was

Seized upon the boy with a dreadful outcry.

said very drily, "making them a great quantity of promises which I don't——" Owain stopped in a little confusion, and I looked upon the prisoners. One of them was a long, lean elderly man, and the others, without a word having been spoken among them, all turned their eyes upon him. Sir Arthur began speaking again, but instantly stopped as the tall man straightened himself from the wall, flung his knife to the other side, and went to the door, weaponless. My uncle blew a loud shrill call on the whistle which hung at his button, and the door was cautiously opened, and the prisoner disappeared.

The same process was gone through with each of the other five, and then we went round to the hall, where we found the captives ranged along a bench. Their arms were closely pinioned behind, and their ankles were bound with leathern pony shackles in such fashion that they could move at a shuffling walk, and no faster. A guard of seven or eight men stood over them, and women's faces peeped from the lower end of the hall, eager to catch a glimpse of the terrible Red Men of the Dusk. The latter bore themselves with the stoicism of true savages—they barely deigned to look around them—and when, by chance, I met a glance from one, he eyed me as coldly and hardly as if he stood in a purely indifferent situation.

Sir Arthur uttered a few words of command, and the line of prisoners with their guards was set in motion.

"Shall we go with them?" said Owain.

"Will the house be safe?" I asked.

"Several men will be left to watch it," he replied, "and if you wish for my opinion, I do not think we shall go far."

Sir Arthur took his place between two well armed attendants at the head of the procession, and it moved up the mountain road, a couple of active fellows on either side of the way searching every hollow where an enemy might be concealed as a precaution against surprise. Owain and I brought up the rear. Our pace was timed to that of the shackled, shuffling prisoners, and we mounted the hill very slowly. I looked upon the wild, pinioned figures before me, and felt the irony of the circumstance that we should be marching thus to accommodate these children of the mountain, who had hitherto flown over its face nimbly as the wild goat.

Half a mile from the house we turned to a side track, and Owain nodded to himself. "I was sure of it," he said in my ear.

"Of what?" I asked.

Owain said nothing for the moment, but half lifted his finger. We topped a little rise and he pointed before us. A short distance in front was a steep hill crowned with a clump of ragged, stunted trees.

"He will hang them to those trees and leave them swinging there as we do crows in a cornfield," said Owain.

"Without trial, without form of law?" I asked.

"Trial! Law!" repeated Owain. "Those are words of little import here as regards the common people, aye, and for plenty above them. And indeed, who is there to inquire or care for what becomes of such rogues as these? Those who hear of it will praise Sir Arthur heartily, and the relations whom the Red Men leave behind them are little likely to prosecute him at law for his lack of form in disposing of their friends."

"But they will exact a dreadful revenge."

"They are bent on that now, in any case," replied Owain. "And he will leave the fewer to execute it."

In a short time we were up among the trees, and at a glance I saw what a spot Sir Arthur had chosen for his gibbet. On every hand the country lay below us like a map. Far to the west a grey level patch marked the sea, and the slant of the stunted trees told of the winds which raced in from that quarter. The Red Men of the Dusk looked around them with quick, uneasy glances as they were halted in the tiny wood, and when a mountain pony came scrambling up after us laden with coils of rope, every man turned his fierce eyes upon my uncle, and uttered a deep, guttural cry of scorn.

Two of them made an attempt to burst their bonds and run, but it was useless, and within the instant they were struck down and pinioned still more securely. The other four, after that single note of rage and scorn, remained as impassive as the hills around them. I now saw for the first time that one of them was a mere boy, not more than fourteen years old. Even as I looked the tall, elderly man, who had seemed their leader, moved a little towards the lad, and began to speak to him in a low, caressing voice. The savage mask dropped off, and his features worked with strong emotion. This, and the likeness that existed between them, made the situation clear—they were father and son. The boy paid but little heed, nodding carelessly now and again, and looking from side to side with a sullen glare.

Sir Arthur now began to call out quick orders, and his men ran right and left. In a trice half-a-dozen ropes were run over branches lofty enough to swing the Gwylliard Cochion several feet from the ground, and the execution proceeded swiftly. Already four figures were writhing in horrible contortions, when a woman darted into the circle and seized upon the boy with a dreadful outcry. Her scream was echoed by my uncle, who doubted not but to see a whole band upon us, and there was a general run to arms. But no one else appeared, and the poor creature who had got among us must have exercised wonderful cunning to evade the sentries posted about the hill.

She was an elderly woman, though it is likely she was not so old as she looked, for so wild a life must age them beyond their time. Her foul, tangled, scanty elf-locks, once red, now bleached to a dry wheaten shade by weather and years, hung low over her hard, worn features, her great, dark eyes looked unnaturally large and bright in their hollow sockets, and as she fondled her child, the business

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we were engaged upon, distasteful before, now seemed to me dismally repulsive.

The little group drew every eye, and for a few moments no one moved or spoke: father, mother, and son, even the rude fellows who were stringing up the Red Men of the Dusk as indifferently as if they were hanging salmon to smoke, stood at gaze, struck by the dramatic quality of the scene.

My uncle alone remained unmoved and venomous; he shouted an angry order, and the woman cried out as if she had received a wound. She turned and flung herself upon her knees before Sir Arthur, pouring out, with tears and uplifted hands, frenzied entreaties that he would spare her son, her youngest, her dearest; for her husband she uttered no plea, she knew it would be useless, but she begged for the boy's life in terms which moved every listener but one. There was no need to be able to understand her words; the piercing quality of pathos and longing in her voice went to the very heart. Had she spoken nothing, the simple, natural eloquence of her entreating gestures would have said everything. My uncle took but little heed of her, called out to his men again in a harsh, grating voice.

"Poor soul," said I to Owain. "It would be a burning shame to kill her child before her very eyes. But surely Sir Arthur will not go so far as that."

"H'm," said Owain. "It is hard to say."

Upon that hint I stepped forward.

"Uncle," said I, "will you not let the poor woman take the boy, at any rate? He is but a mere lad, and certainly we ought not to take vengeance upon children."

My uncle turned and looked at me, his mouth set in a hard, cruel smile. "Would you spare a young adder because it is young?" he answered. "Will it not shortly become full grown, and who is to blame then if it stings you?"

He said no more, and I heard a scuffling noise behind me. I turned my head, and saw that a rope was already round the neck of the Red Man of the Dusk. He was dragged to a tree near at hand and run up instantly. The woman, with a harsh scream, ran to the boy and held him tightly in her embrace, her face streaming with tears and her voice choked with sobs.

I made another attempt to move my uncle, but he turned on me, his face black with rage.

"I tell you, nephew," he cried, "that I would hang every one I could lay my hands on, and these fellows would gladly assist me. You talk like a raw boy, whose heart softens at every whine he hears. We must root out these rogues, we must, we must!"

He raised his voice and gave a view-halloo, as of one cheering his hounds on their prey, and I turned my head and saw that the lad was being torn from his mother's clutch. She struggled and fought like a wild cat, but in vain. Feeling her arms empty, she gave one dreadful cry, then sprang towards Sir Arthur. He whipped out his sword and turned its point upon her; but she stopped at a distance of several feet from him and stood at her full height, her tears gone, her eyes darting flame. With a great gesture she clutched the rags which covered her breast, and tore them away, laying her withered bosom bare to the chill wind.

"These breasts," she cried shrilly, and beat them with her clenched fist, "these breasts have given suck to other sons than this, and they still live. They will avenge their little brother. Be sure they shall dip their hands in the warmest blood of your heart for this day's work."

"Is there no rope left for her?" screamed Sir Arthur. "Hang her up! Throw down one of those rogues already dead and seize her. She must carry no tales back to her tribe."

I saw a couple of men advance upon her, and she eyed them unshrinkingly. The last grain of my patience ran out and I drew my sword and stepped between.

"Not while I can lift an arm to stop you," said I. "No, no. Those men, that is one thing; this woman, another. What! put to death in cold blood the mother who rushed into danger to embrace her child for the last time!" and I placed myself in ward.

I believe now that I should have fared very hardly on that occasion had not Owain also interposed, for my uncle's followers were scarcely less ferocious against the Gwylliard Cochion than himself. But when Owain spoke up and declared that he would stand by me in the matter, things assumed a different look. Men who, at a look from my uncle, would have attacked me instantly, would not stir a step against Owain, and Sir Arthur knew it. For an instant he glared at me savagely, his dark eye burning bitterly, his thin, fine face drawn and white; then, with a single glance round the six figures now hanging horribly limp and still, he gave an abrupt signal for departure.

Owain and I were the last to leave the little wood, and as we went down the hill, well to the rear of our companions, we heard the long, piercing, wailing cry of the Red Woman of the Dusk mourning her dead.

(To be continued.)

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The Nearness of Death.

He was a bad lot. So, at least, had thought several of the inhabitants of Brisbane Terrace, which eminently respectable neighbourhood he had honoured with his presence for some hours past.

The neighbourhood in which the terrace was situated was one of the quietest and most severely respectable to be found in all suburban London, and the favoured mortals resident therein were naturally deeply imbued with the dislike which respectability entertains towards slouch caps, wisp neckerchiefs, and rags.

He was not tall; if five feet six, certainly no more. He was not old either; one would have felt assured in saying that he was not over twenty. But he was undeniably ugly, and he looked unmistakably brutal. His shoulders were broad, but inclined forward, so contracting his chest. A low forehead, small, deep-set, grey eyes, flat nose, wide mouth with strong teeth and massive jaw of the true bull-dog type, made up a face of which the impression was both sullen and brutish.

Exactly an hour had elapsed since he had turned this particular corner, moving with that indescribable shuffle which seems peculiar to the genus rough, and after looking up and down the street, settled himself in position against the wall. He had not moved since, except once, when the sight of an exceptionally tempting straw had made him cross the road in order to secure it.

The object of his watch was not very apparent. The locality was not one likely to be selected by those who might reasonably be supposed to be associates of his, unless, indeed, a scouting expedition was on foot with a view to facilitating prospective burglary. But then it was too early for that. Besides, had the watcher at the corner been a burglarious spy, he would not have stayed there, where he could see little or nothing; and had he been awaiting the return of such a spy, he would not have done so at a point so open to observation, and at which a policeman might arrive at any moment.

He was not begging either. Although masculine humanity seemed to have altogether deserted the place, he made no attempt to approach a single door, and although the quietness and openness of the street offered great facilities to any one bent on speedy plunder, and speedier escape, he had not shown the slightest intention of speaking to, much less of frightening any one of the passers-by.

An hour and a-half had passed, and still he had not stirred; only stood there, nibbling the straw and raising his head at times to look, first up, then down the street, always bringing his eyes back to the same spot of the road.

A policeman appeared at the far end of the terrace, and, after surveying the position for full five minutes, advanced with slow deliberation along the railing.

"Hillo!" began the policeman, as he came up. "What are you doing here?"

"Nothin'."

"Then if you're doing nothing, you'd better move on," was the sharp reply.

"Well, I ain't agoin'."

"Then I'll make you—to the station," returned the policeman angrily, as he stepped forward, and caught him by the collar.

"Look 'ere, you ain't got nothin' agin' me; I ain't bin adoin' nothin' to nobody. I want to stay 'ere for a bit. I'm awaitin' to see somebody as I seed in the 'orspital."

"What hospital?"

In answer to this question the man related at some length how he had been an inmate of one of the City hospitals, and how the clergyman, who had frequently visited the ward wherin he lay, had brought with him a visitor, whom he, the narrator, now wished to see, with much more of a similar nature. As he proceeded the other moved his hand from his prisoner's collar, and listened with some curiosity. The queer petitioner concluded with:

"I on'y got out last week, an' I on'y found out as the

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—the—as wot I want to see stays somewheres 'ere. I ain't agoin' to speak nor ax nothin', an' arter that I'll go away an' won't trouble nobody. Will yer, guv'nor?"

As he asked the question he looked anxiously at his companion, and twisted the straw nervously in his grimy hand.

The policeman stood irresolute.

"It's a rum go," he said at last. "If I was sure. Who is it? A lady or a gentleman?" suddenly.

The dogged look came back to the man's face. He stood away from the wall.

"That ain't nothin' to nobody," he replied. "Afore I'll tell that I'll go to the station."

The other looked at him keenly.

He met the scrutiny with a firmness not without its effect.

"Well," said the policeman, after some minutes of reflection, "I don't know that I'm doing right, but I'll give you an hour. If there's nobody up to that time you'll walk and just mind that I'll keep my eye on you."

And he did.

Ensconcing himself in a pillared doorway some fifty yards off he kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the ruffianly figure leaning against the sunny wall and staring into the roadway.

Only ten minutes of the stipulated time remained. The policeman had shifted his standpoint several times, and had grown thoroughly tired of it all, but the other had not moved. Just as the former had restored his watch to his pocket for the twentieth time, he saw his suspicious acquaintance lift his head for the usual up and down inspection. He looked up the long street, then turned his head in a slow way towards the lower end of it. As he obtained a full view, the hidden watcher saw him start forward a little, and remove his hands from his pockets, take the straw from his mouth with the right, and pull the peak of his cap farther over his eyes with the other.

The policeman had barely noticed these movements when he heard footsteps behind him. Turning quickly, he saw two people approaching, a man and a girl. The former was a grave middle-aged gentleman, dressed in black, and having the appearance of a prosperous professional man; the latter was a tall, ladylike girl, plainly but tastefully attired, and evidently about eighteen years of age.

Watching the two nearing the corner where the now motionless figure of the queer suspect stood like a black splash against the sunny wall, he saw the latter raise his head slightly, as if peering from under the peaked cap. After they passed he rose to his full length, and stood looking after them. The policeman left his shelter and went towards him.

The man did not seem to hear the other's footsteps as he drew near, and it was not till he felt a hand placed on his shoulder that he became conscious of the policeman's proximity. He started, and removing his eyes from the two figures, now almost at the upper end of the terrace, said:

"I'm a-goin' now."

"Which of them was it?" curiously.

For answer the other suddenly turned away, and made off round the corner. The questioner seemed inclined to follow him for a moment, then thought better of it, and resumed his regulation tramp up the terrace with an amused grin on his face.

The rough proceeded down the road. He did not seem to have any clear purpose, but wandered on in an aimless way, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his jacket and his eyes bent on the ground.

Mile after mile was passed, and still he gave no indication of stopping. He had long left the busier portion of the city behind, and was nearing the open country. He climbed a fence into a field, and flung himself down on the ground, his head buried in his arms.

Of what was he thinking? The long ward with its white floors and rows of cots, the flickering figures of the nurses, the cheerful faces of the doctors, the sameness, and the weakness—all the old sights and feelings came back till he saw and felt them over again.

And then that day when beside the kind grave face of the parson, he saw another; a pure, refined face, with clear pitying eyes and gentle mouth. He remembered how strangely it had affected him before she spoke, and then—he dug his ironshod heel savagely into the grassy bank.

Then his mind reverted to the days of his early childhood. The picture was dark enough. A mother who cared for her children only in so far as they could soon beg or steal that which would minister to her depraved appetite; a father who never cared for them at all; a home wherein no kind word was ever spoken, where love never came, where brutal vice and squalid misery dwelt continually, where the brothers and sisters were enemies, whose only bond of union was their dread and hatred of their parents. The last were dead now, which was one comfort, he thought, smiling grimly.

And now, what had come to him? he asked himself. Was it only the weakness, not yet overcome, that had followed his illness? Was it that that made him turn from his mates, from everything which he had valued and striven for before, in spite of his efforts to be his old self? And why was that face always before him? What was she to him, or he to her—he did not even know her name—only knew that she was a lady and—and——

Or was it not his illness, after all? Could it be true, what he had heard from the parsons and many others who had formed food for jest and scoff of his again and again, about God, and virtue, and right—names whose meaning he only dimly guessed? Was it true, after all, what they said about the happiness of honesty and manliness, after the joy and honour that could be won and worn in the face of day? It might be, and if it was, could he not try it?

His heart throbbed heavily at the thought, and in his soul something seemed to throb and stir. Half-aloud he asked himself again, could he not try—but how?

His face worked convulsively, he put it down on his crossed arms, one sob, heavy and hoarse, shook him from head to foot, and he lay still.

The sun had long set, and the stars were beginning to sparkle overhead, when he arose. In the west the last fires of day were fading. Seen by the dim light his face looked even more than usually repulsive. His teeth were hard set, and the old scowl had deepened. He stood so for some time, and then turned to begin his homeward journey.

* * * * *

"Forward the escape men! quick with it!" and into the glare of the burning buildings the stalwart firemen rushed the life-saving engine, and prepared to raise it

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against the wall of the house, while hoarse cries of encouragement rose from the surging crowd.

From roof to basement the upper end of Brisbane Terrace was in flames, all except the highest storey of the last house. From every window rolled columns of smoke, in which the gathering tongues and flashes of fire played like lightning. Over that portion of the terrace in which the conflagration had originated the roof had fallen in, and the flames towered and roared into the midnight sky, lighting up the adjacent buildings and the vast crowd as with the glow of noonday. Against the glare the forms of the firemen loomed like silhouettes as they strove to gain point after point from which they could fight their giant enemy.

At a window of the upper storey of the house at the extreme end of the terrace appeared the figure of a woman. In the lurid light of the flames her face and form were clearly discernible. Amid the thickening smoke she leant forward, her clasped hands extended to those below in mute supplication. In the cleared space beneath a man was struggling in the grasp of two stalwart constables, who held him back from rushing on certain death.

"Let me go!" he cried, striving furiously to free himself. "She is my daughter. Let me go, I say!"

"You can't help her, sir. Here's the escape, thank Heaven! She's safe yet, sir," and the man's voice betrayed the extent of his relief.

Amid deafening cheers from the crowd the machine was swung towards the window.

A fierce rush of flame darted forth from a portion of the sinking roof. It crashed inwards, striking in its descent the weakened outer wall, already tottering. There was a loud cry of horror and warning, a tremendous crash as the mass fell bodily, hurling the escape to the ground in ruins, and narrowly missing several of the firemen.

There was an instant of dead silence, and then arose a wild tumult of terror and agony, the frantic shrieks of women mingling with the hoarser cries of men. The weak fainted, the strong averted their faces and wrung their hands in shuddering horror.

Fighting desperately, the miserable father strove like a madman to free himself, while his agonised cries went to the very hearts of those who heard them.

Suddenly a single voice was raised in a cheer, almost frantic in its excitement. All eyes were upturned, and then a shout—such a shout as only comes from hearts stirred to the core—arose from the crowd.

Clinging like a cat to the ornamental escape-pipe that ran up the corner of the building, was the figure of a man. His arms and feet were bare, and round his waist he carried a coil of rope. Although in the confusion following the destruction of the fire-escape he had gained two-thirds of the distance unnoticed, it seemed almost impossible that he could gain the roof. The pipe was encircled with wreathes, with bosses between, but they afforded slight hold, and the severity of the strain seemed too great for mortal strength to endure.

Up, up, unresting, unwavering, he crept. His naked hands and feet were red with blood, his hair and clothing were scorched, and the rope was smouldering in places. Billows of smoke rolled past, hiding him at times from sight, fiery tongues darted at him, sparks fell in blistering showers over him, all unheeded. His upturned face was white and set, his eyes fixed on the summit of his perilous ascent.

He was within a foot of the roof. A great silence fell on the crowd. Would he do it? In the quivering limbs and convulsive gasps that shook his frame they read his desperation and agony.

An instant of shuddering doubt, and then like a thunderclap rose the exultant shout of those below, as, with a last desperate effort, he swung upwards and stood on the roof, with his face turned full to the crowd. It was the rough.

With swift hands he fastened the rope to the twisted gutter channel, and lowered himself to the window. The woman had disappeared. As he vanished among the smoke now pouring from it, a tall, spare man rushed into the clear space below, and cried in a voice like a trumpet:

"Quick, quick! The roof's fallin', mate!"

He reappeared, bearing in his arms a limp, motionless figure wrapped in a blanket. Amid exultant shouts, he secured the rope round it, and, bracing himself firmly against the ledge, lowered it swiftly to where, unheeding the blistering heat, the father stood, with upraised arms, sobbing out prayers and blessings.

The rope was instantly cut from the rescued figure, and again the voice of the tall man was heard.

"Quick, mate! For your life—quick!"

An outburst of flame from the window below him, and he saw the rope part and fall. He was lost.

He raised himself quietly and folded his arms. He heard confusedly the wild outcry that rose from the distracted sea of human beings beneath; saw women and men covering their faces; heard and saw them as if afar off; for in his soul shone a light that made him forget all else.

He knew now the meaning of his trouble. He had loved her and he had saved her—the nearness of death had made all clear. He had saved her, and that was enough for him. Standing there glorified in the light of his self-sacrifice, purified by the fire of his martyrdom, the ignorant, rough, gaol-bird was true man at last.

The roof bent, the flame came nearer. The tall man below cried, "Good-bye, mate; good-bye."

He heard and waved his hand in answer. A crash, a rush of blinding flame, and he was gone.

It was better so. He was fittest for death just then.

LE FRERE.

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GANGARO'S REVENGE.

THE gaunt figure of a cowled monk stood in the doorway of the Marquis de Silva's tent in the French camp near Zaragossa, and calmly faced the grandee of Spain, who had sold his sword to the enemies of his country in the troublous times of 1808.

"What is your errand?" asked the Marquis curtly.

The monk began in measured tones: "You are thirty years old to-day; you are a colonel in the pay of Joseph Bonaparte, the French usurper; your father left you vast estates and you have run through two fortunes; your only hope is in your sword, and yet you are ambitious."

"You have taken a good deal of trouble to tell me what I already know full well," sneered the Marquis.

"I tell you this to prove that I know you, as you know yourself. You may win honours in the field, but you want wealth, and seek to marry an heiress," continued the monk deliberately.

The Marquis started, and looked somewhat uneasily at the speaker. Then he replied with studied indifference: "And what of that? There are plenty of heiresses in Spain, thank Heaven!"

"The one *you* want is in Zaragossa, and is betrothed to your comrade in arms, Count Armand de Tréville," whispered the monk, coming nearer to him. "Listen, señor! There is one man who can help you, and is willing to do so; but he must first know what you will do for him in return."

"I will give him what he asks."

"On your honour as a gentleman?"

"I promise," said de Silva.

"Then your will shall be done," answered his mysterious visitor, casting a furtive glance round to see that they were unperceived, before he quickly threw back the cowl and displayed the familiar features of Gangaro, the Marquis's former tutor.

De Silva uttered an exclamation of surprise, but the monk motioned him to keep silence, and went on quickly: "I am tired of monastic life, with its petty squabbles and dull routine, so if I help you to wealth, you must give me a wider field for my energies, a more exciting career. To the world I shall be your secretary, in reality I shall be your confidante and secret agent. You have fixed your choice on Donna Juana de Moncada, one of the richest heiresses of Spain. She shall be your wife before two days have passed. But we must not be seen together," he said, drawing down his cowl again, and in another moment he had stolen out into the darkness.

Juana de Moncada was the daughter of one of the proudest houses in the Peninsula, and had been left an orphan a few weeks previously, when her father had fallen trying to rid his country from the grasp of the tyrant who claimed all Europe as his own. She had been rescued and protected by a chivalrous young French noble, Count Armand de Tréville, and, in spite of his nationality, she had learnt to return his love. During the siege of Zaragossa she had found shelter with a fruit seller, an old servant of her father's, and had passed as his niece; but now the city had fallen, and Armand was ordered away with his regiment.

In the hope of ensuring her safety from molestation he had prevailed upon Juana to become his wife before he left, and after much hesitation she had consented, knowing that her confessor, a man whom she trusted blindly, would perform the ceremony for them.

The morning after his interview with Don Garcias de Silva, Gangaro paid a visit to M. de Rouvigny, a powerful French official who had just arrived in Zaragossa. After a due display of cringing deferences, he informed the exalted personage that his nephew, Count Armand de Tréville was about to contract a clandestine marriage with the niece of a tradesman in the city.

"But how come you to know this?" asked M. de Rouvigny angrily.

"The girl is one of my penitents, and I was asked to perform the ceremony to-night. She is both good and beautiful; but not the wife for your Excellency's nephew."

"Quite so, I understand. You are a man of honour and sense. I will prevent it at all costs."

That night Count Armand was dispatched to Paris,

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nominally on an important mission, but virtually he was placed under arrest till he should be out of harm's way.

Donna Juana kept her tryst at the little church of Santa Térésa and plighted her troth in the semi-darkness to the muffled figure at her side. As they left the porch a carriage dashed past. There was a man's pale, strained face pressed against the window, and he raised his hands as if imploring for help; but the driver lashed up his horses, and in a moment only the echo of the clattering hoofs broke the silence.

Juana felt a thrill of undefined terror, and clung more closely to her bridegroom's arm; but a strange voice fell upon her ear, and when she sought his eyes her heart seemed to turn as cold as ice within her, for it was the proud, cruel face of the Marquis de Silva that bent over her, not the beloved features of Armand de Tréville.

Five years later Don Garcias de Silva had climbed as high as the hand of Joseph Bonaparte could raise him. He had squandered the greater part of his wife's fortune and was preparing a double way of escape for himself, when the star of the Bonapartes should have set. He was at the head of a band of Spaniards who thought to raise a successful revolt in Madrid, and should that fail, as he feared it might, he had resolved to sell his sword to the victorious Wellington, whom the wisest of his countrymen had already hailed as the only bulwark against the oppressor.

The conspirators had just dispersed after an enthusiastic meeting at his palace; José, their trusty messenger, had been dispatched on an important mission with letters to Salamanca, and everything seemed to be working smoothly; but he had forgotten to reckon with Gangaro, the man who had saved him from ruin, who had pronounced the sacrilegious blessing on his marriage, and who had sold his own sacred office for the glitter of worldly advantages.

De Silva had not confided his far-reaching schemes to Gangaro of late, he would gladly have shaken off the sullied hand that he had once grasped so readily; but Gangaro thought differently.

The morning after the conspirators' meeting he entered his master's room as usual and began to tell him the news.

"They say there is a dangerous conspiracy in Madrid."

"They've been saying that for the last six months," laughed the Marquis.

"But now they can even name the leader—no less a person than yourself, monseigneur!"

De Silva dropped his eyes for a second before Gangaro's piercing gaze, but a moment later he went on with a short, hard laugh:

"That is news indeed! What else do they say?"

"That a special envoy has been dispatched by the French government to investigate the plot which is known to have its headquarters here in Madrid, and that short shrift will be given to all concerned."

"And do you know the name of this envoy extraordinary?"

"Count Armand de Tréville," replied Gangaro with malicious emphasis.

The Marquis uttered a smothered oath and the secretary went on quietly:

"He is endowed with absolute power of life and death; but no doubt you will hear it all from himself. His first visit is sure to be to his former comrade in arms."

"Yes, of course," answered Don Garcias shifting uneasily in his seat. "But these futile attempts at revolt are beneath my notice. I have far weightier matters to engross my attention," he added with his usual *hauteur*.

Gangaro bowed low and withdrew. A satisfied smile lit up his face with an evil light when he had closed the door behind him.

"He still refuses to confide in me," he said to himself, "but I have frightened him. He is too daring to be long influenced by fear, so I must have proofs."

He went into the garden and carefully examined the state of the paths, still moist from the rain of the preceding day, and under the windows of a disused wing of the palace he saw the marks of many feet and traced them to the ivy-covered postern gate in the outside wall.

More moved by the news than he cared to admit, De Silva's busy brain set to work to counteract this unpleasant turn of events. He knew that Count Armand had no suspicion of the treachery he had employed to steal Juana, but any revelation of the same might prove a fatal bar to his escape to the English lines. He went to his wife's apartments, where Donna Juana received him with her usual chilling courtesy. Her beautiful face told the story of her loveless, hated marriage, which only the consolations of religion and the heroism of her race had enabled her to endure.

"You seem sad, Madame?" he began mockingly. "It is well that I am the bearer of news that will cheer you. In three days is the anniversary of our wedding day, and I propose to give a brilliant fête in honour of the occasion."

"There is little cause for rejoicing," said Donna Juana wearily.

The Marquis winced, for he had loved her in his own savage way, and her continued aversion to him was a deep source of mortification.

"You were ever cruel," he said bitterly. "But the fête will take place by my orders, and it is my desire that you shall wear your richest gems and costliest robes, for you will have to open the ball with our former mutual acquaintance, Count Armand de Tréville."

Juana caught at the arm of the carved chair beside her at the sound of her lost lover's name, and her husband watched her struggle for self-command with cruel satisfaction.

"Your orders shall be obeyed," she said in a toneless voice, and as soon as he had left her with mocking courtesy, she sank down before her *prie-dieu*, her mind racked with rage and humiliation, and tortured by a hope that she dare not cherish.

After finding the footsteps in the palace garden, Gangaro had been stealthily following up the clue, though his cunning enabled him to conceal the workings of his mind from the Marquis. The night before the ball José returned with a sealed packet for his master, and Gangaro met him at the postern gate.

"Give me the papers, monseigneur is waiting impatiently," he said.

"But do *you* know——?" faltered José.

"Of course, you insolent rogue! I am in his Excellency's full confidence. There is no time to be lost!"

For a moment José wavered, his hand sought the packet, and then his master's solemn warning came back to him, and he replied firmly:

"Then lead me to monseigneur. I can go as quickly as you."

Gangaro seized him by the arm and dragged him into the deep shadows, then there was a push, a blow, a

muffled scream, and José lay dead—stabbed through the heart, while Gangaro hurried from the spot with the proofs of his master's complicity in the plot.

The ball was a brilliant success. The mass of gaily attired guests seemed to have forgotten alike their own and their country's woes in the spirit of revelry and rejoicing. The Marquis de Silva was still feverishly awaiting José's return, and every hour's delay was making his position more desperate. Juana and Armand had met at the opening of the gorgeous fête, and their eyes had told that their love still lived despite the dense cloud of misapprehension that had parted them. De Silva seemed to take pains to throw them together.

"Armand, why did you forsake me?" Juana asked passionately, when they were alone later in the evening.

"Why were you false to me, Juana? I recognised you leaving the church," was his reproachful answer.

"False! Ah, Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed with a sob, and then she told him how she had been duped, and he knew for the first time how his former comrade had stolen his bride from him. His rage against de Silva knew no bounds; but she checked him with the words:

"Remember, he is my husband!"

At that moment the Marquis appeared in the doorway of the ante-room, and Armand went towards him, saying as he passed:

"Now I know all, we will settle it to-morrow."

As he spoke, a French officer bearing a warrant entered the salon, unannounced, and behind, in the corridor gleamed the swords of the Royal guard. He marched direct to Don Garcias de Silva, saying:

"In the name of the King, your sword, monsieur!"

The Marquis hesitated for a moment. Resistance and flight were equally impossible. Then he turned to M. de Tréville and said:

"I swear on my honour as a gentleman not to escape, but give me a moment alone."

Armand signed to the officer to leave them, and simultaneously the brilliant throng dispersed as if by magic.

"Did you order my arrest, monsieur?"

"No, I don't understand——" answered Armand.

"Ah, then José is not coming back! I begin to understand," said the Marquis, turning a trifle paler.

"You are right, monseigneur," hissed Gangaro, who had drawn near; "you would have shaken me off and left me in the lurch, so I took steps to place you in safe keeping."

Don Garcias hardly vouchsafed to look at the speaker, but turned to his wife and placed her hand in that of Count Armand, saying:

"I parted you, the least I can do is to re-unite you."

Then he raised his head proudly and spoke again:

"A de Silva does not perish like a common criminal, he dies of his own free will; but before he dies, he punishes."

And before those standing round realised what he was doing, he had drawn two pistols from his pockets and fired. One ball pierced the heart of Gangaro the traitor, the other penetrated his own brain. The officer rushed back into the room as the two bodies fell heavily to the ground, and Armand gently led the half-fainting Juana from the terrible scene, saying:

"Come, my dear one. The Marquise de Tréville, my mother, is awaiting us in Paris." Helen Thör.

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

IV.—THE BRAND OF THE DOUBLE "O."

MOST of the men on the farm were in love with Baker's daughter. She was a good looking girl, for sure, for her hair was extremely black and yet no blacker than her eyes, and her cheeks glowed like the sides of a scarlet berry in the sunshine. There was mischief in those eyes, bless 'em, and it is only for love of them that I do not count up on my fingers how many men are dead to-day because of those dimples in her cheeks.

It was more her manners than anything else which had me stampeding with the other men and mixed up in the family feud. I'm not saying it against her, because she was a lady through and through, but she was just like one of the boys among us. She would smoke her cigarette, you know, and mix the cock-tails, and look after herself in surprising fashion. One day at a dance, before you knew, she had out her pocket gun and was blazing away at Joe Carter's feet. You never saw a clear space made so quickly in your life. "The clumsy wretch trod on my toe," she said. Next moment she was apologising to me in that pretty way of hers for interrupting our waltz.

However, a few days later a little matter rose between us. I had gone down to the depôt for a load of hay, and it turned out to be about the biggest load that two horses ever had to pull. We weren't half way back when one of them gave out. I stopped at Carter's place and unhitched there to rest the beasts, and on entering the barn I saw that someone else from the farm was around, because there was Baker's white mare lazily munching at a big pile of grass. I guessed in a moment it was Rose, who no doubt had come down to Mrs. Carter's meeting; but I chose to think otherwise.

She was sitting by herself in the porch, and I went up and leant on the railing and asked whether she had come to inquire how Joe was after the dance. It was a stupid question to ask, because she had missed him with every shot and the fact rankled with her. But it is not till a man begins to have grey hair that he learns you must never chaff a woman.

"Now, how is that man with the cloven foot?" I asked.

"It's not my fault if his foot's not cloven," she answered, thrusting out her pretty chin which was always a sign of anger. "Joe's a big man, to be sure, or the man I was dancing with might have had the nerve to see that he did not go unpunished."

"As for that," I said carelessly, "I'll put the mark of the beast on Joe Carter whenever it pleases you to see him punished for daring to tread on your toe."

"It's easy to talk," she said, poking out her chin still farther.

"Not when a man's with *you*, Rose," I answered, "because your beauty holds him spell-bound. But I've given two things to you, my word and my heart, and if you'll keep the one I'll keep the other."

"Oh, as for your heart!" she said. But she was not altogether displeased, for she was fully as fond of attention as any girl in the Southern states of America.

I asked her what she was doing there, because in view of her relations with Joe.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of him," she said. "I'm here looking for trouble. Besides there was to have been a sewing class, but perhaps it's postponed as there is no one about."

As this seemed probable I proceeded to make myself comfortable in the chair beside hers. It was the first opportunity that had come my way for a long while to be alone with her, and I endeavoured to make the most of it, especially in view of the dethronement of Joe, who had been the favourite until he had proved himself so clumsy a dancer. But it was now my turn to be clumsy, and though she was pleased to encourage my attentions, I felt rather like a mouse in the claws of a cat, an exquisite cat, a sweet cat, a lovable cat—but with claws.

Yet if I lacked skill and wanted confidence, I seemed to be making not so bad an impression after all. Finally, when she declared it was time for us to be starting for the farm I even stole a kiss unrebuked. No one else on the farm had ever kissed Rose, and I could scarcely credit my good fortune. From that moment the world went round the other way with me. However, girls are most changeable at times, and Rose was the worst girl that way I have ever known.

When it came to putting the horses back in the waggon I found the black was still played out. He would never be able to stand that journey in front of such a load. So I suggested to Rose that I should hitch up the white mare, and put her saddle on the tired beast.

Would she let me?

Well, would she?

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The world got going round the usual way in a minute.

It was a lucky thing for me that she hadn't got her revolver on her at that moment. But business is business, and I had to get that load of hay up to the farm. Moreover you must never let a woman have her head. Without entering into an argument, therefore, I hitched up the white horse and put Rose's saddle on the black.

"Are you coming along?" I asked.

"No!"

"Why? That black horse is perfectly good for riding," I said taking the reins and climbing up on the hay.

She stood leaning against the barn door biting her pretty lips.

"I love you just the same, Rose," I explained. "I've got to get this load of hay home, and you know well enough that I am going about it the best way. It's quite time you learnt to give way sometimes, darling."

Her only answer was to make a hole in the ground with her heel.

I don't mind confessing that for a moment I hesitated. I even contemplated climbing down from my perch and changing horses again. But, on the other hand, man was made the master, and it is none of his business to let girls get the better of him.

"Well, I am going, Rose," I said. "I've enjoyed this afternoon, and I call it real mean of you to spoil it by pretending to be angry just because I want to borrow your horse."

"You'll be sorry for this," she said, still leaning against the barn.

"The only thing I'm sorry about, darling," I said, "is that we are not going to spend the rest of the afternoon together. It's breaking my heart to leave you."

She was a very angry woman when I left her standing there. But how silly of her to make such a fuss about riding a tired horse. There is a sort of pride about some girls which makes them want to have their own way. I don't understand it, and I don't approve of it. I might have stood there arguing all the afternoon about the necessity of my having her horse and she would not have yielded. Besides, I would make it all right with her when she came home in the evening. What a pretty girl she was to be sure!

However she had not a pretty temper. She did not show up at all that night. The next morning I was out with the other boys branding the cattle when Joe Carter came along on that wall-eyed mare of his. He hitched her to the rail and strode over to where I was working.

"Morning," I said.

"Morning. Look here, young fellow," said he, "what do you mean by insulting Rose down at our place, yesterday." His cheek-bones were working ominously under his dusky skin. "That kind of thing is not allowed down at our place," he said.

It was really preposterous that this fellow, whom Rose had commissioned me to punish, should put on a blustering air of that kind.

"I am glad you mentioned Miss Rose's name," said I, "because, now I think of it, I promised to finish the work she began the other night, and split your toes like those of a steer."

It is seldom I speak too quickly, but I did on that occasion, for the words were not out of my mouth before I realised that my revolver was in my coat, and my coat on the fence.

But my branding iron with the double "O" mark was in my hand, and just properly hot, and before he had time to draw his gun I had planted it full and square on his forehead.

Some steers make no noise under the iron, and others yell and moan as if their tails had been wrenched right out in the twisting, but a whole herd of them together could not have made the noise that Joe Carter did when the hot iron bit into his flesh. Moreover, thinking I might brand him in another part, he took to his heels and fled.

Now there was one thing I was glad about. I had put myself straight with Rose, and I had put an end to Joe's chance once and for all. I should not hear any more impertinence from him, and he would go about for the rest of his days with the mark of the beast on his forehead.

However, Rose was in no haste to express her gratitude. I really believe that for the moment my little masterliness with her in choosing which horse she should ride and which I should drive, annoyed her more than all Joe's clumsiness.

Five days later she spoke to me for the first time since that delightful afternoon when I won her love and gave her mine in exchange.

She was riding her white horse, and she came to where I was working in the orchard and sat idly watching me for a while. Then she said:

"I'm going to get married."

"Oh!"

"I'm going to marry Joe Carter."

"Ah!"

"He's marked like the rest of father's property," she said, "and that settles it."

"Ah!"

"You didn't think of that, did you?" she went on sweetly. "Well, now, I'll give you a piece of womanly advice. You do more thinking in future. Think before you make a woman ride home on your worn-out horses, and think before you make up your mind to stay in this part of the country, because next time Joe sets eyes on you he will shoot you. That's my advice. Good-bye!"

It was because I did not take her advice that I lost my arm, but I had the satisfaction of shooting Joe in the leg and giving him a cloven foot after all.

This may seem a wild kind of courtship to you, but it's a history of any day in the Southern States, and the feud between Joe's family and mine is not at all exceptional. Only it's not every man that has the brand of the double "O" on his forehead, and when you see one marked like that you may know that he belongs to Rose.

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, or Varicose Veins, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free.
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100 PACKETS showy Flower Seeds, 1/6; unequalled anywhere.
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A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 92A Aldersgate Street, London.

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Postage 6d. extra. Black or Navy Serge Cloth, all sizes, lined linenette, divided back, buttoned tabs, elastic stirrups. If saddle-gored, 7s. 11d. KNICKERS 2s. 11d.
THE NEW COAT, from 7s. 6d., made to measure.
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Write for New Season's List.
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Juno No. 4, £10 10s. 17/6 monthly.

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Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. 39/-
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ALL FAT PEOPLE
can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."
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SULPHOLINE LOTION,
For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.
SHILLING BOTTLES.

PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.
Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.
Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.
THE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL PIANOFORTE CO.,
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Agents wanted where not represented.

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Beautiful creations for the new century, brightening up also the remaining months of the old. No daintier or more delightful goods ever made than the P. & S. They stand apart from the corset crowd. They are the latest triumph of the corset-makers' art, and are winning golden opinions everywhere. Perfection of shape. High-grade materials. Expert workmanship. Economic prices. Rustless Zairoid replaces steel in busks and supports. Think what all this means!
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W. PRETTY & SON, IPSWICH.

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

Brown wishes to know if I can tell him which is the British business for the carrying on of which the largest working capital is required.————I should say the London and North-Western Railway with its enormous plant and rolling stock.

Fly.—Naturalists say that a single swallow will devour 6,000 flies in a day.

Observant asks why coachmen and footmen sometimes have cockades at the side of their tall hats and sometimes do not.————Because some employers of coachmen and footmen fancy themselves rather more distinguished than others, and take this means of letting the world at large know the estimate they put upon their own importance.

S. T.—Oh, no! If there were but one potato in the world, a careful cultivator might produce 10,000,000,000 from it and its offspring in ten years, and that would supply the world with seed again.

M. D. R.—It is calculated that by the time it is thoroughly fit for service each horse purchased for the Army costs about £55. The actual price paid for remounts for the cavalry is not supposed to exceed £33 apiece, but the horses, of course, have to be trained after they are bought.

Skin.—The skin of the so-called blue fox, whose beautiful fur is almost worth its weight in gold. Polish ladies greatly admire this fur, and dream of possessing it as a part of their wedding outfit; but no one can form an adequate idea of the true beauty of this animal who has not seen him on the Siberian steppes. Not many Siberians can boast of having enjoyed the sight, as this creature is very scarce, very timid, and by far more wary and cunning than any other of his species.

J. N. S.—Two-thirds of the total number of children under ten years of age in the United Kingdom are insured in one form or another.

Pressure.—Eggs could be thrown into the air and allowed to fall on turf without breaking. Another peculiarity of an ordinary egg (unboiled) is its power of resisting a crushing strain. It may interest you to try the experiment of placing an egg *endways* between the palms, then interlace the fingers and squeeze as hard as they can, as one would squeeze a lemon. You will probably get tired before the egg does. But place the egg sideways between the palms, and it is easily broken. Of course, the egg must be a sound one.

Top.—Yes, some of the tops with which the Chinese amuse themselves are as large as barrels. It takes three men to spin one, and it gives off a sound that can be heard several hundred yards away.

Jack.—Observations upon flint scrapers found in various parts of Europe has led to the belief among experts that the proportion of left-handed persons was much greater in pre-historic times than at present. Out of 354 neolithic scrapers which were examined, it was determined that 105 were used by the right hand and 197 by the left; the remaining fifty-two were not marked so clearly that it could be determined by which hand they were used, or they may have been used by either indifferently.

Bike.—It is a misdemeanour to throw upon any road in New York State, glass, tacks, or any sharp substance likely to injure bicycle tyres.

Sale.—Anciently, in many parts of France, when a sale of land took place, it was the custom to have twelve adult witnesses accompanied by twelve little boys; and when the price of the land was paid, and its surrender took place, the ears of the boys were pulled, and they were beaten severely, so that the pain thus inflicted should make an impression upon their memory, and, if required afterwards, they might bear witness to the sale.

W. K.—What you describe as a novelty in advertising (viz., putting an advertisement slip in a pocket in railway tickets) is not new, and you do the French an injustice in giving the credit of it to the Italians, as I know, from travelling in France, that this form of advertising has been in vogue for some considerable time on some, if not all, the French railways.

S. C.—The Glasgow Savings Bank has the credit of being the largest in the United Kingdom.

J. G.—An easy way to reckon the pressure of the atmosphere at any particular spot is to remember that it comes to very nearly a ton for every square foot of surface. The weight of the entire atmosphere in tons is expressed by sixteen figures, of which the first three are 524 and the rest noughts.

Actor.—Dramatists in France get twelve per cent. of the gross receipts of each play, and are allowed tickets to the value of one hundred francs for every performance of such plays as they have written.

J. M.—Half-a-million persons, it is stated, are, in one way or another, employed on the Sabbath in connection with the drink traffic, and 200,000 of these are young women.

P. L.—No, the sponge is an animal. Authorities agree in putting it in the lowest scale of animal life.

Equine.—Nearly 20,000 horses are imported into this country every year.

Geo.—At Hirniskretschen, in Bohemia, from the unequal working of nature in the destruction of rocks, has resulted a most colossal and ruggedly beautiful arch, the summit of which is upwards of 1,400 feet above sea level. The sides and top together appear at a distance like the frame of an immense picture, the latter being represented by the wildly romantic scenery which is visible through the opening of the arch.

G. M. R.—Probably not more than one person in every 200 in this country knows a foreign language. About seventy per cent. of the population belong to the working classes, among whom a knowledge of a foreign language is very exceptional. The majority of the middle and upper classes get a smattering of some foreign tongue while at school, but it is not often that this results in real knowledge of the language.

Just a few words to remind my readers that the Fresh Air Fund list is open. Although the subscriptions come to £20 this week, a very large amount of money is yet wanted before we can carry out our programme for the summer. So far, I am afraid that *Short Stories* readers have not contributed their proper share towards the total sum subscribed, and I feel sure that it is only necessary to remind them that ninepence pays for a whole day's happiness for a child to find donations rolling into this office. If any of you would like to have a collecting form, one will be sent along on receipt of a post-card.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
Double ,, ,, ,,	1	0	0
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PILLS AND OINTMENT

HAVE HELD FRONT RANK FOR SIXTY YEARS AS

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINES.

The Pills are especially recommended for the use of females. They cure Headache, Indigestion, Biliousness, Heartburn, Palpitation, Nervousness and Giddy Sensations.

The Ointment cures all Skin Diseases, Stiff Joints, Sores, Old Wounds, Piles, Fistulas, Asthma, Bronchitis, and Influenza,

Manufactured only at 78 NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON. *Sold by all Chemists.*
Advice gratis, daily (Saturdays excepted), between 11 and 4, or by letter.

CONSUMPTION.

Particulars of, and treatment for a **SUCCESSFUL** and speedy **CURE** for this disease can be obtained by sending stamped addressed envelope to "M," 6 Selwyn Avenue, Richmond, Surrey. This advertisement is genuine and is not connected with any other under the same heading.

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BY THE FREE USE OF

LILLIE POWDER.

Its subtle MEDICINAL PROPERTIES Nourish, Heal and Soothe the delicate nerves of the skin, and bring Health and Beauty to all. Unsurpassed for all ailments of the skin. See testimonials.

Prepared from the original recipe invented by Mrs. Langtry, under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. Clarkson.

Order it of your Chemist, and be sure and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious. SEND FOR IT AT ONCE as you value the health of your skin.

THREE TINTS: White, Flesh-colour, & Cream.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! IT'S MASON'S

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

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MASON'S WINE ESSENCES

AND

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3 three assorted 1/8.

Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

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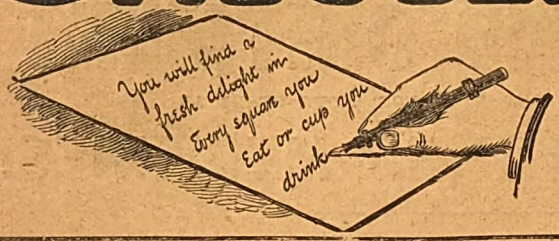
Perfect in Flavour and Quality.



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PRICE 3D. PER LARGE DOUBLE TABLET

"Ivy" Soap

Its remarkable property of Floating on Water prevents the annoyance of losing the soap, as it is always in sight – ready when wanted.

To be had of all Grocers, Stores, etc.

If any difficulty, Three Cakes will be sent Carriage Paid, on receipt of Address & Twelve Stamps or One Shilling Postal Order, by

IT FLOATS

GOODWINS' SOLE MAKERS 371 Ordsall Lane MANCHESTER.

WASHES EVERYTHING

TO BE HAD OF ALL GROCERS &c.

MANUFACTORY: DUKINFIELD, MANCHESTER.

SCRIVEN

'DOLLY' BLUE

Notice.—"DOLLY" Blue is neatly tied in a white bag to a small handle to hold by whilst using. It is the cheapest and best Laundry Blue in the market. "Dolly" Blue is sold by all Grocers and Oilmen at ½d. per bag.

IMPORTANT.—The public are cautioned against attempts which may be made to supply other Blue, Tints, and Dyes than those of Messrs. W. Edge and Sons Ltd., when "Dolly" Blue, "Dolly" Tints, and "Dolly" Dyes are ordered.

The Dolly Specialities are manufactured by

W. EDGE & SONS LIMITED, BOLTON, LANCS.

IT IS NOT

Reckitt's PARIS BLUE

UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.

READ "CAGED"! THE STORY OF A MAD-HOUSE, JUST STARTED IN PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 539. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 29TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

Disordered Nerves.

When the Nerves are disordered, when trifles jar the mind and cause the nerves to jangle and respond painfully to any effort they are called upon to make, when the spirits are low, the Mind depressed, with a desire to let things slide and do their worst, then it is that Guy's Tonic should be forthwith used. The good it will do in strengthening the whole Nerve and Physical tone of the body is very great, and speedily makes itself manifest in cheerier Spirits, in increased Energy, and greater Physical Strength and Vigour.

Also when the Stomach is disordered, when the food disagrees and meals are rather avoided than sought out, then again will Guy's Tonic play a benevolent part, by correcting the disordered digestive faculties, by ensuring that food shall be digested, and then by attaining its complete Assimilation it will make you healthy and strong.

"Nerves and Indigestion."

"Weingoch District,
"Beaufort, Breconshire.

"Having been in a very weak state through Nerves "and Indigestion, I am truly thankful for the good I "have derived from taking Guy's Tonic.

"S. WILLIAMS."

"Bilious Sickness."

"Milburn Bank, Southwick,
"Dumfries.

"Please send me another bottle of Guy's Tonic. I "feel much better already from taking the one I got. "I have been a Martyr for Years to Indigestion and "Biliousness, and at times very sick, vomiting every- "thing I ate, and sometimes the Sickness would "continue for Weeks at a time. *I was beginning to "give up all hopes of ever getting any medicine to do me "any good,* and so when I saw Guy's Tonic advertised, I "resolved to try it, and I am happy to say it has had "the desired effect. "JANET DICKSON."

Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per Bottle, is on sale at all Chemists and Stores.

10/6 BUY DIRECT FROM Allen Foster & Co SOLE MAKERS OF THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES BY PARCEL POST. 10/6

A Bargain in Costume Skirts. Made in a good Black and Navy Serge lined throughout, price only 3/11, carriage 6d. extra.

Design No. 97. 10/6

Design No. 97.—Half a Guinea.—Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable **Chesterfield** Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or in the famous **Specialite Serge** for **Half a Guinea.** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at 5/6; carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric, Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple. When ordering please give measurement round bust (under arms), length of sleeve inside, size of waist, and length of Skirt in front.

Design No. 97.—10/6. Patterns & Sketches post free.

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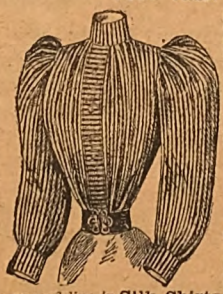

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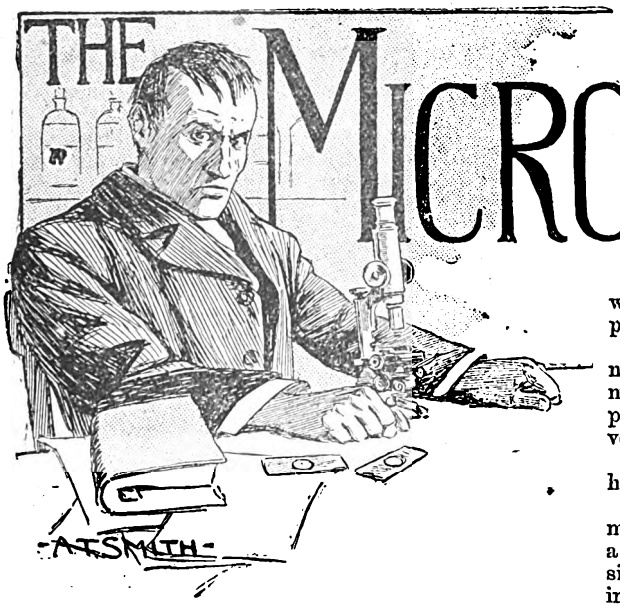

EVER since my boyhood my inclination had been towards microscopic studies. When I was ten, I had an instrument given me which, though a mere toy, was so much better than anything I had looked through previously that I wandered about for hours in solitude, examining drops of rain and all kinds of objects. I made up my mind that my life should be devoted to that science; but I did not have things quite my own way.

As I grew up, my parents, who saw but little likelihood of anything practical resulting from the examination of bits of moss and drops of water through a brass tube and a bit of glass, were anxious that I should choose a profession. It was their desire that I should enter the counting-house of my uncle, Edward Blake, a prosperous merchant, who carried on business in London. This suggestion I decisively combated. I had no taste for trade; I should only make a failure; in short, I refused to become a merchant.

But it was necessary for me to select some pursuit. My parents were staid people, who insisted on the necessity of labour, and, therefore, although, thanks to the bequest of my poor Aunt Alice, I should, on coming of age, inherit a small fortune, sufficient to place me above want, it was decided that, instead of waiting for this, I should act the nobler part, and employ the intervening years in rendering myself independent.

After much cogitation I complied with the wishes of my family, and selected a profession.

I determined to study medicine in London.

This disposition of my future suited me. A removal from my relations would enable me to dispose of my time as I pleased without fear of detection.

I might shirk attending the lectures if I chose; and, as I never had the remotest intention of going through an examination, there was no danger of my being "plucked." Besides, a metropolis was the place for me.

There I could obtain excellent instruments, the newest publications, intimacy with men of pursuits kindred with my own—in short, all things necessary to insure a profitable devotion of my life to my beloved science.

I had an abundance of money, few desires that were not bounded by my illuminating mirror on one side and my object-glass on the other; what, therefore, was to prevent my becoming an illustrious investigator of the veiled worlds?

It was with the most buoyant hope that I left my home and established myself in London.

My first step, of course, was to find suitable apartments. These I obtained after a couple of days' search, a very pretty second floor unfurnished, containing sitting-room, bedroom, and a smaller apartment which I intended to fit up as a laboratory. I furnished my lodgings simply, but rather elegantly, and then devoted all my energies to the temple of my worship.

I set myself to work with a zeal which few scientific students have ever equalled. I had everything to learn relative to the delicate study upon which I had embarked—a study involving the most earnest patience, the most rigid analytical powers, the steadiest hand, the most untiring eye, the most refined and subtle manipulation.

For a long time half my apparatus lay unused on the shelves of my laboratory, which was now most amply furnished with every possible contrivance for facilitating my investigations. The fact was that I did not know how to use some of my scientific implements—never having been taught microscopy—and those whose use I understood theoretically were of little avail, until by practice I could obtain the necessary delicacy of handling. Still, such was the strength of my ambition, such the untiring perseverance of my experiments, that in the course of one year I became theoretically and practically an accomplished microscopist.

During this period of my labours, in which I submitted specimens of every substance that came under my observation to the action of my lenses, I became a discoverer—in a small way, it is true, for I was very young, but still a discoverer. It was I who destroyed Ehrenberg's theory that the Volvox globator was an animal, and proved that the "monads" with stomachs and eyes, were merely phrases of the formation of a vegetable cell. Still I felt dissatisfied. At every step I found myself stopped by the imperfections of my instruments. Like all active microscopists, I gave my imagination full play. Indeed, it is a common complaint against many such, that they supply the defects of their instruments with the creations of their brains. I imagined depths beyond depths in nature which the limited power of my lenses prohibited me from exploring.

I lay awake at night constructing imaginary microscopes of immeasurable power, with which I seemed to pierce through all the envelopes of matter down to its

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original atom. How I longed to discover the secret of some perfect lens, whose magnifying power should be limited only by the resolvability of the object, and which at the same time should be free from spherical and chromatic aberrations, in short from all the obstacles over which the poor microscopist finds himself continually stumbling.

I felt convinced that the simple microscope, composed of a single lens of such vast yet perfect power, was possible of construction.

To attempt to bring the compound microscope up to such a pitch would have been commencing at the wrong end; this latter being simply a partially successful endeavour to remedy those very defects of the simple instrument, which, if conquered, would leave nothing to be desired.

It was in this mood that I became a constructive microscopist. After another year passed in this new pursuit, experimenting on every imaginable substance—glass, gems, flints, crystals, artificial crystals formed of the alloy of various vitreous materials—in short, having constructed as many varieties of lenses as Argus had eyes, I found myself precisely where I started, with nothing gained save an extensive knowledge of glass-making.

I was almost dead with despair. My parents were surprised at my apparent want of progress in my medical studies (I had not attended one lecture since my arrival in the city), and the expenses of my mad pursuit had been so great as to embarrass me very seriously.

I was in this frame of mind one day, experimenting in my laboratory on a small diamond—that stone, from its great refracting power, having always occupied my attention more than any other—when a young Frenchman, who lived on the floor above me, and who occasionally visited me, entered the room.

I think that Jules Simon was a Jew. He had many traits of the Hebrew character, a love of jewellery, of dress, and of good living. There was something mysterious about him. He always had something to sell, and yet went into excellent society. When I say sell, I should perhaps have said peddle; for his operations were generally confined to the disposal of single articles—a picture, for instance, or a rare carving in ivory.

When I was first furnishing my rooms, he paid me a visit, which ended in my purchasing an antique silver lamp and some other knick-knacks for my sitting-room. Why Simon should pursue this petty trade I never could imagine. He apparently had plenty of money.

On the present occasion Simon entered my room in a state of considerable excitement.

"Ah! *mon ami!*" he cried, before I could even offer him the ordinary salutation, "it has occurred to me to be the witness of the most astonishing things in the world. I promenade myself to the house of Madame—. How does the little animal, le renard, name himself in Latin?"

"Vulpes," I answered.

"Ah! yes—Vulpes. I promenade myself to the house of Madame Vulpes."

"The spirit medium?"

"Yes, the great medium. Great heavens! what a woman! I write on a piece of paper many of questions concerning affairs the most secret—affairs that conceal themselves in the abysses of my heart the most profound; and behold! by example! what occurs? This woman makes my replies the most truthful to all of them. She talks to me of things that I do not love to talk of to myself. What am I to think? I am fixed to the earth!"

"Am I to understand you, M. Simon, that this Mrs. Vulpes replied to questions secretly written by you, which questions related to events known only to yourself?"

"Ah! more than that, more than that," he answered, with an air of some alarm. "She related to me things ——. But," he added, after a pause, and suddenly changing his manner, "why occupy ourselves with these follies? It was all the biology, without doubt. It goes without saying that it has not my credence. But why are we here, *mon ami?* It has occurred to me to discover the most beautiful thing as you can imagine—a vase with green lizards on it, composed by the great Bernard Palissy. It is in my apartment; let us mount. I go to show it to you."

I followed Simon mechanically; but my thoughts were far from Palissy and his enamelled ware, although I, like him, was seeking in the dark a great discovery. This casual mention of the spiritualist, Madame Vulpes, set me on a new track. What if this spiritualism should be really a great fact? What if, through communication with more subtle organisms than my own, I could reach at a single bound the goal, which perhaps a life of agonising mental toil would never enable me to attain?

While purchasing the Palissy vase from my friend Simon, I was mentally arranging a visit to Madame Vulpes.

Two evenings after this, thanks to an arrangement by letter and the promise of an ample fee, I found Madame Vulpes awaiting me at her residence alone. She was a coarse-featured woman, with keen and rather cruel dark eyes, and an exceedingly sensual expression about her mouth and under jaw. She received me in perfect silence, in an apartment on the ground-floor, very sparely furnished. In the centre of the room, close to where Mrs. Vulpes sat, there was a common round mahogany table. If I had come for the purpose of sweeping her chimney, the woman could not have looked more indifferent to my appearance. There was no attempt to inspire the visitor with awe. Everything bore a simple and practical aspect. This intercourse with the spiritual world was evidently as familiar an occupation with Mrs. Vulpes as eating her dinner or riding in an omnibus.

"You come for a communication, Mr. Linley?" said the medium, in a dry, business-like tone of voice.

"By appointment—yes."

"What sort of communication do you want? a written one?"

"Yes—I wish for a written one."

"From any particular spirit?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever known this spirit on this earth?"

"Never. He died long before I was born. I wish merely to obtain from him some information which he ought to be able to give better than any other."

"Will you seat yourself at the table, Mr. Linley," said the medium; "and place your hands upon it?"

I obeyed—Mrs. Vulpes being seated opposite to me, with her hands also on the table. We remained thus for about a minute and a half, when a violent succession of raps came on the table, on the back of my chair, on the floor immediately under my feet, and even on the window-panes. Mrs. Vulpes smiled composedly.

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"They are very strong to-night," she remarked. "You are fortunate." She then continued. "Will the spirits communicate with this gentleman?"

Vigorous affirmative.

"Will the particular spirit he desires to speak with communicate?"

A very confused rapping followed this interesting question.

"I know what they mean," said Mrs. Vulpes, addressing me; "they wish you to write down the name of the particular spirit you desire to converse with. Is that so?" she added, speaking to her invisible guests.

That it was so, was evident from the numerous affirmatory responses. While this was going on, I tore a slip from my pocket-book, and scribbled a name under the table.

"Will this spirit communicate in writing with this gentleman?" asked the medium once more.

After a moment's pause, her hand seemed to be seized with a violent tremour, shaking so forcibly that the table vibrated.

She said that a spirit had seized her hand and would write. I handed her some sheets of paper that were on the table, and a pencil. The latter she held loosely in her hand, which presently began to move over the paper with a singular and seemingly involuntary motion. After a few moments had elapsed, she handed me the paper, on which I found written, in a large, uncultivated hand, the words, "He is not here, but has been sent for."

A pause of a minute or so now ensued, during which Mrs. Vulpes remained perfectly silent, but the raps continued at regular intervals. When the short period I mention had elapsed, the hand of the medium was again seized with its convulsive tremour, and she wrote, under this strange influence, a few words on the paper, which she handed to me. They were as follows:

"I am here. Question me.

"LEEUWENHOEK."

I was astounded. The name was identical with that I had written beneath the table, and carefully kept concealed. Neither was it at all probable that an uncultivated woman like Mrs. Vulpes should know even the name of the great father of microscopy. I wrote on my slip—still concealing it from Mrs. Vulpes—a series of questions, which, to avoid tediousness, I shall place with the responses, in the order in which they occurred:

I. Can the microscope be brought to perfection?

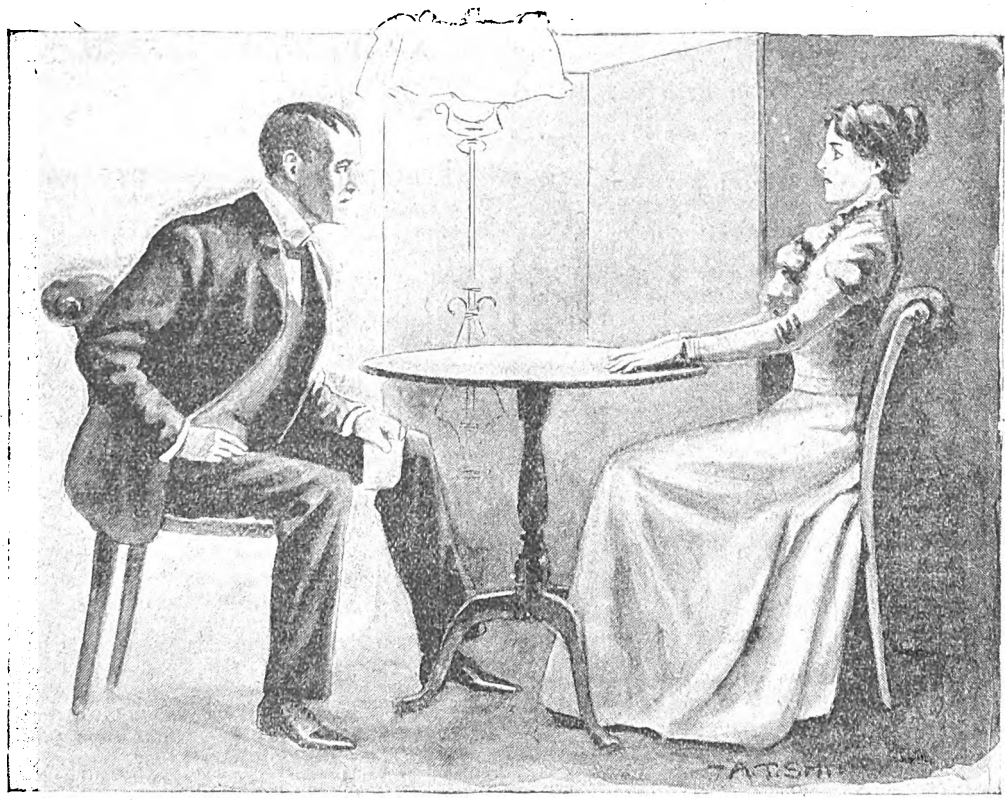
Spirit. Yes.

I. Am I destined to accomplish this great task?

Spirit. You are.

I. I wish to know how to proceed to obtain this end. For the love of which you bear to science, help me!

Spirit. A diamond of one hundred and forty carats, submitted to electro-magnetic current for a long period, will experience a rearrangement of its atoms *inter se*, and from that stone you will form the universal lens.



I tore a slip from my pocket-book and scribbled a name under the table.

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I. Will great discoveries result from the use of such a lens?

Spirit. So great that all that has gone before is as nothing.

I. But the refractive power of the diamond is so immense that the image will be formed within the lens. How is that difficulty to be surmounted?

Spirit. Pierce the lens through its axis, and the difficulty is obviated. The image will be formed in the pierced space, which will itself serve as a tube to look through. Now I am called. Good-night!

I cannot at all describe the effect that these extraordinary communications had upon me. I felt completely bewildered. No biological theory could account for the discovery of the lens. The medium might, by means of biological rapport with my mind, have gone so far as to read my questions, and reply to them coherently. But biology could not enable her to discover that magnetic currents would so alter the crystals of the diamond as to remedy its previous defects, and admit of its being polished into a perfect lens. Some such theory may have passed through my head, it is true; but, if so, I had forgotten it.

In my excited condition of mind, there was no course left but to become a convert, and it was in a state of the most painful nervous exaltation that I left the medium's house that evening.

I walked home with but one thought possessing me—how to obtain a diamond of the immense size required. My entire means, multiplied a hundred times over, would have been inadequate to its purchase. Besides, such stones are rare, and become historical. I could find such only in the regalia of monarchs.

There was a light in Simon's room as I entered the house.

A vague impulse urged me to visit him. As I opened the door of his sitting-room unannounced, he was bending, with his back towards me, over a carcel lamp, apparently engaged in minutely examining some object which he held in his hands. As I entered, he started suddenly, thrust his hand into his breast-pocket, and turned to me with a face crimson with confusion.

"What!" I cried. "Poring over the miniature of some fair lady? Well, don't blush so much; I won't ask to see it."

Simon laughed awkwardly enough, but made none of the negative protestations usual on such occasions. He asked me to take a seat.

"Simon," said I, "I have just come from Madame Vulpes."

This time Simon turned as white as a sheet, and seemed stupefied as if a sudden electric shock had smitten him. He babbled some incoherent words, and went hastily to a small cupboard where he usually kept his liquors.

Although astonished at his emotions, I was too preoccupied with my own idea to pay much attention to anything else.

"You speak truly when you call Madame Vulpes a devil of a woman," I continued. "Simon, she told me wonderful things to-night, or rather was the means of telling me wonderful things. Ah! if I could only get a diamond that weighed one hundred and forty carats!"

Scarcely had the sigh with which I uttered this desire died upon my lips, when Simon, with the aspect of a wild beast, glared at me savagely, and, rushing to the mantelpiece, where some foreign weapons hung on the wall, caught up a Malay creese, and brandished it furiously before him.

"No!" he cried in French, into which he always broke when excited. "No! you shall not have it! You are perfidious! You have consulted with that demon, and desire my treasure! But I will die first! Me! I am brave! You cannot make me fear!"

All this, uttered in a loud voice trembling with excitement, astounded me. I saw at a glance that I had accidentally trodden upon the edges of Simon's secret, whatever it was. It was necessary to reassure him.

"My dear Simon," I said, "I am entirely at a loss to know what you mean. I went to Madame Vulpes to consult with her on a scientific problem, to the solution of which I discovered that a diamond of the size I just mentioned was necessary. You were never alluded to, during the evening, nor, so far as I was concerned even thought of. What can be the meaning of this outburst? If you happen to have a set of valuable diamonds in your possession, you need fear nothing from me. The diamond which I require you could not possess; or, if you did possess it, you would not be living here."

Something in my tone must have completely reassured him; for his expression immediately changed to a sort of constrained merriment, combined, however, with a certain suspicious attention to my movements. He laughed, and said that I must bear with him; that he was at certain moments subject to a species of vertigo, which betrayed itself in incoherent speeches, and that the attacks passed off as rapidly as they came. He put his weapon aside while making this explanation, and endeavoured, with some success, to assume a more cheerful air.

All this did not impose on me in the least. I was too much accustomed to analytical labours to be baffled by so flimsy a veil. I determined to probe the mystery to the bottom.

"Simon," I said gaily, "let us forget all this over a bottle of Burgundy. I have a case of Lausseure's Clos Vougeot downstairs."

I produced the wine and we seated ourselves to drink. By the time we had half finished the second bottle, Simon's head, which I knew was a weak one, had begun to yield, while I remained as calm as ever, only that every draught seemed to send a flush of vigour through my limbs.

Simon's utterance became more and more indistinct. He took to singing French *chansons*. I rose suddenly from the table just at the conclusion of one of those incoherent verses, and, fixing my eyes on him with a quiet smile said:

"Simon, I have deceived you. I learnt your secret this evening. You may as well be frank with me. Mrs. Vulpes, or rather one of her spirits, told me all."

He started with horror. His intoxication seemed for the moment to fade away, and he made a movement towards the weapon that he had a short time before laid down. I stopped him with my hand.

"Monster!" he cried passionately; "I am ruined! What shall I do? You shall never have it! I swear by my mother!"

"I don't want it," I said; "rest secure, but be frank with me. Tell me all about it."

The drunkenness began to return. He protested with maudlin earnestness that I was entirely mistaken—that I was intoxicated; then asked me to swear eternal secrecy, and promised to disclose the mystery to me.

I pledged myself, of course, to all. With an uneasy look in his eyes, and hands unsteady with drink and nervousness, he drew a small case from his breast and

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opened it. Heavens! How the mild lamp-light was shivered into a thousand prismatic arrows, as it fell upon a vast rose-diamond that glittered in the case!

I was no judge of diamonds, but I saw at a glance that this was a gem of rare size and purity. I looked at Simon with wonder, and—must I confess it?—with envy.

How could he have obtained this treasure? In reply to my questions, I could just gather from his drunken statements (of which, I fancy, half the incoherence was affected) that he had been superintending a gang of slaves engaged in diamond-washing in Brazil; that he had seen one of them secrete a diamond, but, instead of informing his employers, had quietly watched the negro until he saw him bury his treasure; that he had dug it up and fled with it, but that as yet he was afraid to attempt to dispose of it publicly—so valuable a gem being almost certain to attract too much attention to its owner's antecedents—and he had not been able to discover any of those obscure channels by which such matters are conveyed away safely. He added that, in accordance with the Oriental practice, he had named his diamond with the fanciful title of "The Eye of Morning."

While Simon was relating this to me, I regarded the great diamond attentively. Never had I beheld anything so beautiful. All the glories of light ever imagined or described, seemed to pulsate in its crystalline chambers.

Its weight, as I learnt from Simon, was exactly one hundred and forty carats. Here was an amazing coincidence. The hand of destiny seemed in it. I determined, with most perfect deliberation, to possess myself of Simon's diamond.

I sat opposite him while he nodded over his glass, and calmly revolved the whole affair. I did not for an instant contemplate so foolish an act as a common theft, which would of course be discovered, or at least necessitate flight and concealment, all of which must interfere with my scientific plans.

There was but one step to be taken—to kill Simon. After all, what was the life of a little peddling Jew, in comparison with the interests of science?

The means for accomplishing everything I desired lay within my reach. There stood upon the mantel-piece a bottle half full of French laudanum. Simon was so occupied with his diamond, which I had just restored to him, that it was an affair of no difficulty to drug his glass. In a quarter of an hour he was in a profound sleep.

I now opened his waistcoat, took the diamond from the inner pocket in which he had placed it, and removed him to the bed, on which I laid him so that his feet hung down over the edge. I had possessed myself of the Malay creese, which I held in my right hand, while with the other I discovered as accurately as I could by pulsation the exact locality of the heart.

It was essential that all the aspects of his death should lead to the surmise of self-murder. I calculated the exact angle at which it was probable that the weapon, if levelled by Simon's own hand, would enter his breast; then with one powerful blow I thrust it up to the hilt in the very spot which I desired to penetrate. A convulsive thrill ran through Simon's limbs. I heard a smothered sound issue from his throat, precisely like the bursting of a large air-bubble, sent up by a diver, when it reaches the surface of the water; he turned half round on his side, and, as if to assist my plans more effectually, his right hand, moved by some mere spasmodic impulse, clasped the handle of the creese, which it remained holding with extraordinary muscular tenacity. Beyond this there was no apparent struggle. The laudanum, I presume, paralysed the usual nervous action. He must have died instantly.

I discovered . . . the exact locality of the heart.

There was yet something to be done. To make it certain that all suspicion of the act should be diverted from any inhabitant of the house to Simon himself, it was necessary that the door should be found in the morning locked on the inside. How to do this, and afterwards escape myself?

Not by the window; that was a physical impossibility. Besides, I was determined that the windows also should be found fastened.

The solution was simple enough. I descended softly to my own room for a peculiar instrument which I had used for holding small, slippery substances, such as minute spheres of glass, etc. This instrument was nothing more than a long, slender hand-vice, with a very powerful grip, and considerable leverage, which last was accidentally owing to the shape of the handle.

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Nothing was simpler than, when the key was in the lock, to seize the end of its stem in this vice, through the keyhole, from the outside, and so lock the door.

Previous, however, to doing this, I burnt a number of papers on Simon's hearth. Suicides almost always burn paper before they destroy themselves.

I also emptied some more laudanum into Simon's glass—having first removed from it all traces of wine—cleaned the other wine glass, and brought the bottles away with me.

If traces of two persons drinking had been found in the room, the question naturally would have arisen, "Who was the second?"

Besides, the wine-bottles might have been identified as belonging to me. The laudanum I poured out to account for its presence in his stomach, in case of a post-mortem examination. The theory naturally would be, that he first intended to poison himself, but, after swallowing a little of the drug, was either disgusted with its taste, or changed his mind from other motives, and chose the dagger.

These arrangements made, I walked out, leaving the gas burning, locked the door with my vice, and went to bed.

Simon's death was not discovered until nearly three in the afternoon. The servant, astonished at seeing the gas burning—the light streaming on the dark landing from under the door—peeped through the keyhole and saw Simon on the bed. She gave the alarm. The door was burst open, and the neighbourhood was in a fever of excitement.

Every one in the house was arrested, myself included. There was an inquest; but no clue to his death beyond that of suicide could be obtained. Curiously enough, he had made several speeches to his friends the preceding week that seemed to point to self-destruction.

The jury, after a prolonged deliberation, brought in the usual verdict, and the neighbourhood once more settled down into its accustomed quiet.

The three months succeeding Simon's catastrophe I devoted night and day to my diamond lens. I had constructed a vast galvanic battery, composed of nearly two thousand pairs of plates—a higher power I dared not use, lest the diamond should be calcined. By means of this enormous engine I was enabled to send a powerful current of electricity continually through my great diamond, which, it seemed to me, gained in lustre every day.

At the expiration of a month I commenced the grinding and polishing of the lens, a work of intense toil and exquisite delicacy. The great density of the stone, and the care required to be taken with the curvatures of the surfaces of the lens, rendered the labour the severest and most harassing that I had yet undergone.

At last the eventful moment came; the lens was completed. I stood trembling upon the threshold of new worlds. I had the realisation of Alexander's famous wish before me. The lens lay on the table, ready to be placed upon its platform. My hand fairly shook as I enveloped a drop of water with a thin coating of oil of turpentine, preparatory to its examination—a process necessary in order to prevent the rapid evaporation of the water.

I now placed the drop on a thin slip of glass under the lens, and throwing upon it, by the combined aid of a prism and a mirror, a powerful stream of light, I approached my eye to the minute hole drilled through the axis of the lens. For an instant I saw nothing save what seemed to be an illuminated chaos, a vast luminous abyss. A pure white light, cloudless and serene, and seemingly limitless as space itself, was my first impression.

Gently, and with the greatest care, I depressed the lens a few hairs'-breadths. The wondrous illumination still continued, but as the lens approached the object a scene of indescribable beauty was unfolded to my view.

I seemed to gaze upon a vast space, the limits of which extended far beyond my vision. An atmosphere of magical luminousness permeated the entire field of view. I was amazed to see no trace of animalculous life. Not a living thing, apparently, inhabited that dazzling expanse. I comprehended instantly that by the wondrous power of my lens I had penetrated beyond the grosser particles of aqueous matter, beyond the realms of infusoria and protozoa, down to the original gaseous globule, into whose luminous interior I was gazing, as into an almost boundless dome filled with a supernatural radiance.

It was, however, no brilliant void into which I looked. On every side I beheld beautiful inorganic forms, of unknown texture, and coloured with the most enchanting hues. These forms presented the appearance of what might be called, for want of a more specific definition, foliated clouds of the highest rarity; that is, they undulated and broke into vegetable formations, and were tinged with splendours compared with which the gilding of our autumn woodlands is as dross compared with gold.

Far away into the illimitable distance stretched long avenues of the gaseous forests, dimly transparent, and painted with prismatic hues of unimaginable brilliancy. The pendant branches waved along the fluid glades until every vista seemed to break through half-lucent ranks of many coloured drooping silken pennons.

What seemed to be either fruits or flowers, dyed with a thousand hues, lustrous and ever varying, bubbled from the crowns of this fairy foliage. No hills, no lakes, no rivers, no forms animate or inanimate, were to be seen, save these vast auroral copses that floated serenely in the luminous stillness with leaves and fruits and flowers gleaming with unknown fires, unrealisable by mere imagination.

How strange, I thought, that this sphere should be condemned to solitude! I had hoped, at least, to discover some new form of animal life—perhaps with a lower class than any with which we are at present acquainted, but still, some living organism. I found my newly discovered world, if I may so speak, a beautiful desert.

While I was speculating on the singular arrangements of the internal economy of Nature, with which she so frequently splinters into atoms our most compact theories, I thought I beheld a form moving slowly through one of the glades of one of the prismatic forests. I looked more attentively, and found that I was not mistaken. Words cannot depict the anxiety with which I waited the nearer approach of this mysterious object.

Was it merely some inanimate substance, held in suspense in the attenuated atmosphere of the globule? or was it an animal endowed with vitality and motion? It approached, flitting behind the gauzy, coloured veils of cloud-foliage, for seconds dimly revealed then vanishing; they were gently pushed aside, and the form floated out into the broad light.

It was a female human shape. When I say human, I mean it possessed the outlines of humanity—but there

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the analogy ends. Its adorable beauty lifted its illimitable heights beyond the loveliest daughter of Adam.

I cannot, I dare not attempt to inventory the charms of this divine revelation of perfect beauty. Those eyes of mystic violet, dewy and serene, evade my words. Her long, lustrous hair following her glorious head in a golden wake, like the tract sown in heaven by a falling star, seems to quench my most burning phrases with its splendours. If all the bees of Hybia nestled upon my lips, they would still sing but hoarsely the wondrous harmonies of outline that inclosed her form.

She swept out from between the rainbow curtains of the cloud-trees into the broad sea of light that lay beyond. Her motions were those of some graceful naiad, cleaving, by a mere effort of her will, the clear, unruffled waters that fill the chambers of the sea. She floated forth with the serene grace of a frail bubble ascending through the still atmosphere of a June day. The perfect roundness of her limbs formed suave and enchanting curves. It was like listening to the most spiritual symphony of Beethoven the divine to watch the harmonious flow of lines. This, indeed, was a pleasure cheaply purchased at any price. What cared I, if I had waded to the portal of this wonder through another's blood? I would have given my own to enjoy one such moment of intoxication and delight.

Breathless with gazing on this lovely wonder, and forgetful for an instant of everything save her presence, I withdrew my eye from the microscope eagerly—alas! As my gaze fell on the thin slide that lay beneath my instrument, the bright light from mirror and from prism sparkled on a colourless drop of water. There, in that tiny bead of dew, this beautiful being was for ever imprisoned. The planet Neptune was not more distant from me than she. I hastened once more to apply my eye to the microscope.

Animula (let me now call her by that dear name which I subsequently bestowed on her) had changed her position. She had again approached the wondrous forest, and was gazing earnestly upward. Presently one of the trees, as I must call them, unfolded a long ciliary process, with which it seized one of the gleaming fruits that glittered on its summit, and sweeping slowly down, held it within reach of Animula. The sylph took it in her delicate hand and began to eat. My attention was so entirely absorbed by her, that I could not apply myself to the task of determining whether this singular plant was or was not instinct with volition.

I watched her, as she made her repast, with the most profound attention. The suppleness of her motions sent a thrill of delight through my frame; my heart beat madly as she turned her beautiful eyes in the direction of the spot in which I stood. What would I not have given to have had the power to precipitate myself into that luminous ocean, and float with her through those groves of purple and gold! While I was thus breathlessly following her every moment, she suddenly started, seemed to listen for a moment, and then leaving the brilliant ether in which she was floating, like a flash of light, pierced through the opaline forest and then disappeared.

Instantly a series of the most singular sensations attacked me. It seemed as if I had suddenly gone blind. The luminous sphere was still before me, but my daylight had vanished. What caused this sudden disappearance? Had she a lover or a husband? Yes, that was the solution! Some signal from a happy fellow-being had vibrated through the avenues of the forest and she had obeyed the summons.

The agony of my sensations, as I arrived at this conclusion, startled me. I tried to reject the conviction that my reason forced upon me. I battled against the fatal conclusion—but in vain. It was so. I had no escape from it. I loved an animalcule!

It is true that, thanks to the marvellous power of my microscope, she appeared of human proportions. Instead of presenting the revolting aspect of the coarser creatures that live and struggle and die in the more easily resolvable portions of the water-drop, she was fair and delicate and of surpassing beauty. But of what account was all that? Everytime that my eye was withdrawn from the instrument, it fell on a miserable drop of water, within which, I must be content, to know, dwelt all that could make my life lovely.

Could she but see me once! Could I for one moment pierce the mystical walls that so inexorably rose to separate us, and whisper all that filled my soul, I might consent to be satisfied for the rest of my life with the knowledge of her remote sympathy. It would be something to have established even the faintest personal link to bind us together—to know that at times, when roaming through those enchanted glades, she might think of the wonderful stranger, who had broken the monotony of her life with his presence, and left a gentle memory in her heart!

But it could not be. No invention of which human intellect was capable could break down the barriers that Nature had erected. I might feast my soul upon her wondrous beauty, yet she must always remain ignorant of the adoring eyes that day and night gazed upon her and, even when closed, beheld her in dreams. With a bitter cry of anguish I fled from the room, and, flinging myself on my bed, sobbed myself to sleep like a child.

I arose the next morning almost at daybreak, and rushed to my microscope. I trembled as I sought the luminous world in miniature that contained my all. Animula was there. I had left the gas-lamp, surrounded by its moderators, burning when I went to bed the night before. I found the sylph bathing, as it were, with an expression of pleasure animating her features, in the brilliant light that surrounded her.

She tossed her lustrous golden hair over her shoulders with innocent coquetry. She lay at full length in the transparent medium, in which she supported herself with ease, and gambolled with the enchanting grace that the nymph Salmacis might have exhibited when she sought to conquer the modest Hermaphroditus.

I tried an experiment to satisfy myself if her powers of reflection were developed. I lessened the lamp-light considerably. By the dim light that remained, I could see an expression of pain flit across her face. She looked up suddenly, and her brows contracted. I flooded the stage of the microscope again with a full stream of light, and her whole expression changed. She sprang forward like some substance deprived of all weight. Her eyes sparkled and her lips moved. Ah! if science had only the means of conducting and reduplicating sounds, as it does the rays of light, what carols of happiness would then have entranced my ears!

I now comprehended how it was that the Count de Gabalis peopled his mystic world with sylphs—beautiful beings whose breath of life was lambent fire, and who sported for ever in regions of purest ether and purest light. The Rosicucian had anticipated the wonder that I had practically realised.

How long this worship of my strange divinity went on

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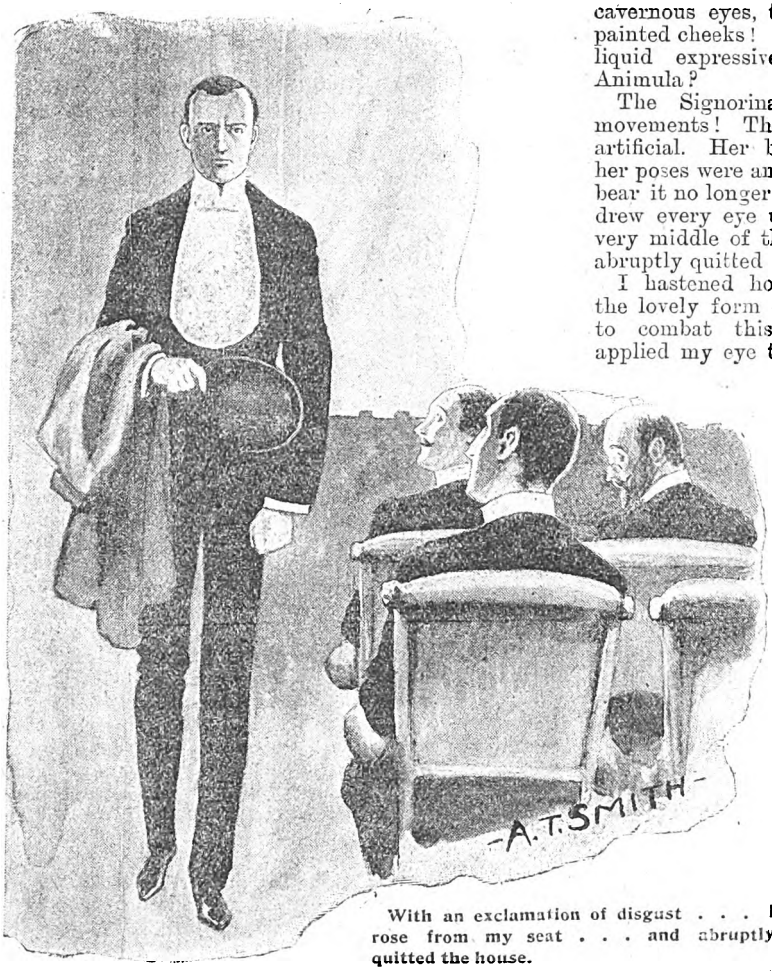

With an exclamation of disgust . . . I rose from my seat . . . and abruptly quitted the house.

thus I scarcely know. I lost all note of time. All day from early dawn, and far into the night, I was to be found peering through that wonderful lens. I saw no one, went nowhere, and scarcely allowed myself sufficient time for my meals.

At length, I grew so pale and emaciated, for want of rest, and continual brooding over my insane love and its cruel conditions, that I determined to make some effort to wean myself from it.

I looked over the newspapers by chance. There I beheld the advertisement of a celebrated *danseuse* who appeared nightly at Niblo's. The Signora Caradolce had the reputation of being the most beautiful as well as the most graceful woman in the world. I instantly dressed and went to the theatre.

The curtain drew up. The usual semicircle of fairies in white muslin were standing on the right toe around the enamelled flower-bank of green canvas on which the belated prince was sleeping. Suddenly a flute is heard. The fairies start. The trees open, the fairies all stand on the left toe and the queen enters.

It was the Signorina. She bounded forward amid thunders of applause, and, lighting on one foot, remained poised in the air.

Those heavy, muscular limbs, those thick ankles, those cavernous eyes, that sterotyped smile, those crudely painted cheeks! Where were the vermeil blooms, the liquid expressive eyes, the harmonious limbs of Animula?

The Signorina danced. What gross, discordant movements! The play of her limbs was all false and artificial. Her bounds were painful athletic efforts; her poses were angular, and distressed the eye. I could bear it no longer; with an exclamation of disgust that drew every eye upon me, I rose from my seat in the very middle of the Signorina's *pas-de-fascination*, and abruptly quitted the house.

I hastened home to feast my eyes once more on the lovely form of my sylph. I felt that henceforth to combat this passion would be impossible. I applied my eye to the lens. Animula was there—but what could have happened? Some terrible change seemed to have taken place during my absence. Some secret grief seemed to cloud the lovely features of her I gazed upon. Her face had grown thin and haggard; her limbs trailed heavily; the wondrous lustre of her golden hair had faded. She was ill, and I could not assist her! I believe at that moment I would have gladly forfeited all the claims to my human birthright, if I could only have been dwarfed to the size of an animalcule and permitted to console her from whom fate had for ever divided me.

I racked my brain for the solution of this mystery. What was it that afflicted the sylph? Suddenly I remembered that I had not looked at the water-drop for several days. In fact I hated to see it; for it reminded me of the natural barrier between Animula and myself. I hurriedly looked down on the stage of the microscope. The slide was still there—but, great heavens! the water-drop had vanished! The awful truth burst upon me! it had evaporated, until it had become so minute as to be invisible to the naked eye; I had been gazing on its last atom, the one that contained Animula—and she was dying.

I rushed again to the front of the lens, and looked through. Alas! the last agony had seized her. The rainbow-hued forests had all melted away, and Animula lay struggling feebly in what seemed to be a spot of dim light. Ah! the sight was horrible; the limbs once so round and lovely shrivelling up into nothings; the eyes —those eyes that shone like heaven—being quenched into black dust; the lustrous golden hair now lank and discoloured. The last throe came. I beheld that final struggle of the blackening form—and I fainted.

When I awoke out of a trance of many hours I found myself lying amid the wreck of my instruments, myself shattered in mind and body as it were. I crawled feebly to my bed, from which I did not rise for months.

They say now that I am mad; but they are mistaken. I am poor for I have neither the heart nor the will to work; all my money is spent, and I live on charity. Young men's associations that love a joke invite me to lecture on optics before them.

"Linley, the mad microscopist," is the name I go by. I suppose that I talk incoherently while I lecture.

Fenton Haspen.

ALPHONSE AND JOSEPHINE.

I.

ALPHONSE wandered by the trout stream. He had a rod in his hand, but he didn't attempt to fish. He hadn't the heart.

"Ah, finny ones," muttered he. "you may frolic in security. You may leap out of the water and secure your fly. Your ingenuous trust shall not be betrayed. The plump bluebottle will be the genuine article. My hook shall not intrude upon your gills this day." Then he cast his tackle from him; and flinging himself upon the daisied turf, he gave liberty to a long pent sigh.

Alphonse was in love.

Josephine was as beautiful and as bright as the glowing sunshine of this summer's day. Josephine was exquisite. Josephine was celestial. Venus herself could not have eclipsed his Josephine.

This thought had scarcely flashed through his mind ere Alphonse started with surprise. He leant on his elbows, and gazed entranced into the waters. Was he enchanted? Could what he beheld be real? He was thinking of Venus, and lo! there he saw Josephine, not rising from the sea, but shimmering amidst the weeds and fishes.

Of course, it was only her shadow that the stream embraced. But think of embracing even that! Oh, lucky stream! And the fishes bobbing up and down caught flies under the very nose of Josephine's reflection.

"They are stealing kisses," cried the amorous Alphonse in a fit of jealousy.

It was then that he felt a gentle "prod." It had been administered by the ferrule end of a lady's sunshade. He looked up into Josephine's face, and was about leaping to his feet, when, with a grace and charm peculiar to herself, she spread out her handkerchief and sat down upon it, by his side.

Rapture!

He had such a lot to talk about that he didn't know where to begin; so for some moments they merely gazed into the stream together, and said nothing.

That's the worst of love: there's often so much in it that nothing expresses so well as silence.

After a while, Alphonse found his voice, and he murmered:

"Josephine!"

The tone in which he uttered this, and the look which accompanied it, spoke a whole volume of love, and was not nearly so wearisome. Josephine must have understood, for she blushed and sighed.

This emboldened him; he caught her dainty gloved hand; he clasped it, conveyed it to his enraptured lips, and—ah, we won't listen to their soft cooings, to their sweet warblings of love. Have we never been caught in Cupid's net ourselves?

How time sped! At last Josephine declared she really ought to be going, and she looked at her watch and wound it up. It was during this trivial operation that Alphonse indulged in a rascally trick. Quick as lightning, he had drawn from his pocket a pair of scissors, and he adroitly snipped off a curl—one of her ambient locks—without her being aware of it. It was one of those ringletty tresses that ladies wear clustered up behind sometimes. So the theft was not difficult to accomplish. Craftily, he secreted his treasure; then he escorted his unwitting lady-love on her way home.

Their road lay for the most part by the margin of the trout stream, and the little fishes would now and again peep up, and, of course, envy them. When the little fishes disappeared, they would leave behind a bubble and an eddying circle. This did not escape Alphonse's notice; nor did he lose the poetic opportunity. He whispered to Josephine that the bubbles were congratulations—as congratulations frequently are—and—the circlets were a pretty piscatorial way of suggesting the ring.

Ah, what an erratic being Alphonse was, and what an imagination he had!

II.

THE lovers were duly engaged.

Alphonse became so jealous of Josephine that he hated her to be looked at, and, like a turbaned Turk, he desired she should wear a veil.

She wouldn't.

Then the green-eyed monster battened on his prey. Alphonse had a bosom friend, and to him he confided the secret of his agony. This friend, who was of a philosophic, not to say mystical, turn of mind, advised a proceeding somewhat out of the common.

"Josephine," said he, "is no doubt, as you have told me frequently, exceedingly beautiful, and, lucky man that you are, I believe her charms are entirely for you. There exist men, myself included, who do not exactly see her with your adoring eyes. I am very fascinating. Now, bewitching though she may be, I should never have imagined it. That, of course, is my blindness, but, nevertheless, it may be fortunate for you, for I am very fascinating. Now Josephine appears to me, and, I think, to the world in general, a frigid sort of a girl, and—pardon me, not so young, but that she might be younger. You have no cause for jealousy."

"But," responded Alphonse in sombre tones, "what if I tell you I am jealous of the past, and of what, through that past, may be looming in the future?"

Nearly to the roots of his hair did his friend's eyebrows elevate themselves. What was he about to hear?

"Josephine has told me she has a secret." This confidence was whispered, and with a glance askance, as if he expected his inamorata to appear at his elbow and denounce him for the betrayal.

"And that secret is—?"

"Still in her own keeping.—But she assures me she will reveal it some day—some day. Ah, Gustave, my friend, can you not now comprehend the jealous pangs that rack my heart?"

"Women are apt to enlarge upon small matters, my dear Alphonse. This may only be a woman's wile to test your love, to try your faith. Think no more of it; and if she ever reverts to it, laugh at it."

"You can never have loved, for you cannot realise the intensity of my passion. Your advice is an impossibility."

"Then turn the other way about. Insist on knowing this secret at once."

"You are a brute. How could I be so indelicate?"

"Then unravel it by other means. Find it out your self and tax her with it. Then it would be at your own option to forgive her or to break off the match."

"Either would break my heart. But I think your advice good. Only how am I to set about it?"

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"Has she not given you some clue?"

"She has never given me anything."

"Dropped some suggestion?"

"She has dropped nothing."

"Umph; then I see but one way out of the difficulty. I have a friend who is a clairvoyant."

"I don't understand."

"He is also a psychometrist."

"And that is—?"

"Give him any small article of your apparel—a glove, a handkerchief—and by holding it against his forehead he will tell your character, and will give you a *résumé* of your past life. I have tested his powers, and what he has told me has been far more truthful than either flattering or pleasant."

"It is humbug."

"I should be sorry to say so from my experience Would you like to test it?"

"Well, I don't know. Yes; there can be no harm in that."

"Have you a glove, or ribbon, or anything that belonged to Josephine, anything that she has frequently worn?"

"I have—a lock of her hair."

"Excellent. To-morrow we will visit the scientist."

III.

"Maximilian, my friend, let me introduce you to an old chum of mine. Alphonse, this is Maximilian the renowned clairvoyant and psychometrist." And very soon they were all cosily seated in the latter gentleman's library.

Gustave soon broached the object of their visit "Max," said he, "I wish you would give us some evidence of your skill. My friend here is a sceptic."

"Sceptic is scarcely the appropriate word," interrupted Alphonse, and, bowing politely to his host, "I am utterly unacquainted with your strange science," said he, "and am not so foolish as to form an opinion upon a subject of which I am entirely ignorant."

"That is certainly proving yourself a sensible person," replied Max, returning the bow. "Unfortunately, the rule is, people begin by pooh-poohing what they don't understand. It gives such an air of superiority, and it saves so much trouble."

"Here is your test," continued Gustave, and, at a glance from him, Alphonse intrusted the cherished tress to the hands of Maximilian. "This," continued he, "was snipped from a lady's head only a few days ago, and has never since left my friend's possession."

"And I suppose you want me to tell you something about that lady?"

"Exactly."

Maximilian held the precious curl in the palm of his hand and pressed it gently against his brow. He remained quite still for a moment; then he looked angry: and then:

"Oh, oh!" said he with a start.

"What's the matter?" inquired Alphonse, awaiting the reply with bated breath.

"Oh, nothing, nothing—merely—umph—this hair has been dyed."

"Ah, that's the secret," and Gustave jumped up, slapping Alphonse on the shoulder. "That's the secret," cried he, "rest assured—dyed hair."

"Oh, there's a secret is there?" muttered the scientist. and he added quietly: "But I presume you know the past of the person?"

"No," interrupted Alphonse, in hasty eagerness, leaning forward in his chair. "No; that's just what I want to find out."

Maximilian quietly returned the lock: "I should rest contented with what I already know. I don't care to tell you anything further."

It was only after great pressure that the scientist could be persuaded to take the hair in his hand again.

"I do this under protest," said he, replacing it against his forehead. "Well, if you must have the truth, the person whose head this was cut from was—well, let us say, not a desirable individual to be acquainted with."

Alphonse crimsoned. Gustave got fidgety.

"A woman of—well—umph—just so."

Alphonse nearly fainted. Gustave looked serious.

"Must I go on?"

"If you please."

"I see the interior of a prison; I—oh, no, I'm extremely sorry to disoblige you, but I positively decline telling you more."

Alphonse, white as a lily to the very lips, mechanically took the proffered tress and thrust it into his pocket.

Bidding the psychometrist a hasty adieu, the two friends were soon in the street, and for a while they pursued their way in silence.

Suddenly Alphonse stopped short, and striking his fist upon a post, "I will go to Josephine at once," said he, "and have all this explained."

"Bravely resolved," cried his friend; and so that he shouldn't change his mind, Gustave took him by the arm and accompanied him to the very door of the house. Furthermore, he knocked at that door, and himself inquired for Josephine. On ascertaining that she was at home, he abruptly shook hands with Alphonse, and left him no option but to face the lady—and the difficulty.

Alphonse was ushered into his sweetheart's presence. Oh, he looked so ill and haggard! Josephine was knitting him a pair of socks when he entered, and she looked up to smile; but she dropped the wool and the needles, and she ran towards him in terror.

"My own, what is the matter?" she cried.

Her surprise may be imagined when he, in reply, seized her by the wrist and hissed into her ear: "Tell me your secret—or I shall do something desperate."

But she was too startled to utter a word.

"Josephine," he hurriedly continued, "I'm on the rack, and I can't stand it."

Then, scarcely knowing what he was doing, he dragged the stolen curl from his pocket, and cast it at her feet.

"Ah, you have discovered," cried she, and with a little shriek she hid her face in her hands.

"Tell me all, tell me the truth—let me know the worst," and he tried to drag away her hands.

"Oh, forgive me for deceiving you," and she burst into tears. "I would have told you all before, but I hadn't the courage. I didn't know how you'd take it."

"Go on."

"It wasn't my fault. I couldn't help it, I——"

"This is torture. Confess all, Josephine."

"It's very short at present."

"Short! Who's short? What's short?"

"But it's growing slowly, but it's growing."

"Josephine, do you want to send me mad?"

She raised her beautiful head and turned her tearful eyes towards him. She said no word, but clutching those ambient locks he loved so well, she took them off—she wore a wig.

A fever, a shaved head, a wig until her own hair grew again—this was Josephine's terrible secret.

Charles Daly.

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From Prairie and Backwoods.

V.—IN GOLD TIME.

He was straight, and grizzled, and keen of eye. He had worked, and fought, and gambled his way through the lawlessness and passion of the State's early life into the decency and uprightness of a successful contractor.

His name was Bill Bowen.

As a civil engineer, I came more or less in contact with him, and rejoiced in the largeness of his mental mould, as well as in the business sense of security he let me enjoy.

One summer's night we took a drive to a distant town on the San Joaquin River. We were to look at the stone for bridge building, and the blistering heat of the day made us willing to lose our sleep for the more comfortable travelling by starlight.

The horses jogged lazily through the coarse, thick dust on the river's bank, and the insects from the grain fields, and the frogs from the sloughs, had things wholly to themselves until Bill suddenly interrupted.

"Mrs. Chase is pretty enough yet to understand why she sent two fellows to destruction, isn't she?"

"What are you talking about?" I answered.

"Oh," said Bill, pulling himself up, "I forgot you didn't struggle with the rest of us through those days."

I knew Bill well enough to let him relapse with silence just so many minutes, then I said:

"Judge Chase's wife is lovelier at sixty than most girls at sixteen, but I hadn't an idea she figured so romantically in the early days as to send anybody overboard."

"H'm," replied Bill reflectively.

The horses travelled on without attention, and I waited patiently.

"You know what it was like," he began at last. "Men with guns from all over the Union, and gold the heaven we toiled for. Court, and the gambling tables running under one roof, and nary a woman's face showing up in the mass to give us courage.

"To be sure, there were vixenish creatures who robbed, and killed, and drank with the worst of us; but until '51 we'd never the woman for reverence. Then by degrees, the lawyers and a stray merchant or two came with their families, but things wasn't brisk till pretty Grace Blanchard got out with her father.

"Understand, she carried herself as she ought to; but, understand, there was men among us as was born and bred to live with blood. The mass of us had to take out our satisfaction in looking at her; but for two the favour in old Blanchard's eyes was easy reading and it wasn't long seeing the course the straw took.

"Ned Emory was a long, lean, fair fellow, with a fine face and a way that made friends of the toughest.

"They said he looked a swell when he called at the Blanchards', but I never saw him but like the rest of us—red-shirted and overalled, and an angle to his pistols that made him a joy.

"George Stokes—'Shorty,' we called him—was a man with an answer that ripped like a knife and a head that made success of everything, because it could work crooked as well as straight.

"He'd been on the bench, but he had located a vein at Mariposa, and was overseeing up there in '52. Naturally, he lost opportunities, not being right on the spot, and the danger began.

"The Blanchard house was larger than most of the cabins, and had two long windows that opened on to a porch. Things might never have been so bad but for those two lidless eyes in front.

"One fatal night Shorty Stokes rode into the settlement—but I'm getting ahead of affairs."

Bill tossed his cigar into the brush, and hurried the horses as the interest of his reminiscences swept him on.

"The girl carried herself after the fashion of high steppers, and neither fellow could swear where he stood. It was laughter and spirit for both of them, they said, and nip and tuck for the yielding. The pace was the sort that exhausts men, and Shorty's brain cooked up a scheme for his rescue. He was for their going together some night before her, and, after a formal marriage proposal, each argue his claim and fitness for ten minutes by the clock, their honour at stake to stand by her decision.

"It got about afterwards that Emory wouldn't consent till he saw by Shorty's earnestness that there would be mischief, and they swore with their fists in each other's to carry the thing through to the finish. The date and hour were arranged for the following Sunday night at eight, and they drank to it with gall in the cup.

"When the evening came the clock had already struck eight when Stokes reached the Blanchard house.

"The lights from the room fell over the porch, and from the shadow of the steps he saw the something that in all the world he couldn't bear to see—Emory crossing the

room to take Grace Blanchard in his arms; Emory with passion paling his face and Grace Blanchard in the beauty of a disturbing humility.

"He swore as he watched them cling to each other, and he took his way back to the saloons and his Mariposa mining.

"The next day he turned up again in the settlement, with enough liquor aboard to put a wheel in his head, and, after a losing fling at the tables, he started to find Emory.

"After a little ineffectual riding, he leapt from the back of his vicious-eyed piebald at the corner that bulged thickest with saloons, and stood close to the stirrup with his hand on his hip. Some one who noticed him said his face had the steely intensity of a razor edge.

"Then out of the crowd, unconscious, with the music of love in his heart, swung Ned Emory. His hat was pushed back on his fair hair, and he was whistling the overflow out of his veins.

"In one instant a bullet rang through the air, followed by another. Emory fell, in his own blood, and a horseman was riding off wildly and safe through the shower of bullets that rained round him. Every man with a mount tore in pursuit, but they only brought back eight half-dead horses. Stokes had staked relay beasts at different points along the road, and then was safe in the chapparal cañons towards the north.

"The gambling dens choked up with crowds; gold dust heaped on gold-dust for the reward of the cowardly hound. Murders weren't rare then, but there was only one Ned Emory, remember.

"Four of us wouldn't drop the search. We let the blood-money men get out of the way, and then we worked as we'd toil for only our own.

"There was scarcely no scent to follow, for Stokes had bribed the greasers who furnished the horses: but we forced our way along on nothing. Day and night we rode on with our eyes open, sometimes bullying and sometimes begging. It began to seem hopeless. The days were running into summer again.

"One afternoon, towards twilight, we rested on the crest of a mountain where the path took a sudden turn away from a two-hundred foot precipice.

"We were torn with the snapping branches of the greasewood, and full of extremest dirt and disgust. Suddenly we heard the rustle of a step on the fallen leaves. Under a live oak, not thirty yards away, on the very edge of the cliff, stood Shorty Stokes.

"He had not heard us, and he stood looking at the moon which hung like a sickle in the sky. The evening star was showing.

"The four of us were like stones. He could have got to Guinea before we moved. Then, simultaneously with our steps forward, he turned and looked into our faces.

"It was a moment to test any man. He stood it as we were used to seeing him face all things.

"'I suppose I'm the man you're after,' he said.

"He said it with the dignity of a parson.

"In a second he had thrown down his pistols. He unsheathed his knives and dropped them to the ground.

"'Take me,' he said.

"Four of us looked into the unflinching clearness of his eyes. As we hesitated, he spoke again.

"'Listen. It is not in excuse that I speak, nor in weakness. It is to tell you that those among you who are men will follow my steps under like circumstances.

"'Emory gave me his hand and his oath to stand by an arranged agreement.

"'We were to meet at eight o'clock on that Sunday night. A—a beautifully good woman was to decide our argument which man she would marry. In riding to meet my engagement I happened on a accident. Within half a mile of the settlement, close on time, my piebald went back on his haunches and the groan of a man came up from the roadside. I found an overloaded miner, hurt in the leg, and the hope in my own heart aroused my sympathy. I mounted the man on my beast and took him back towards camp.

"'Walk as I never walked. I reached the meeting place three minutes late. Ah! out in the darkness I saw Emory taking advantage of the delay.

"'None of you is so much a cur as to let the life run in a man who, under his honour, couldn't yield a rival three minutes' grace.

"'But, with the camp against me and Emory the friend of the sorriest, I couldn't face the music when the justice was done.

"'It is not mercy I ask. It is life hereafter. Come!'

"With a common impulse we started forward, only to halt in a frozen horror as Stoke's broncho threw up his head in alarm to watch with us the backward somersaulting of his master's body over the precipice.

"Though there was but one verdict, even Chase said, as we rode down over the mountain that night, 'Emory might have given Shorty a few minutes' grace.'"

"She jilted me for that fellow, Jim, when we were three days out from Liverpool."

"Threw you overboard in mid-ocean? Barbarous."

Guard (extricating passenger from the wreck of the smoking-carriage): "Are you hurt?"

Passenger: "I should say I am. The accident smashed my hand. I held a nap hand, and was knocked in a heap before I had a chance to play it."

"There seems to be a number of weddings this month," he remarked. "By the way, Miss Carrie, when will I be invited to yours?"

"Will you need an invitation?" she asked, with downcast eyes and mantling cheek.

Chollie: "I say, Fweddie, I see by the papahs that there is a woman in Stockton who cannot say anything except 'Yes' or 'No.'"

Fweddie: "That's nothing at all, Chollie, old boy. I met one last night who couldn't say anything except 'No.'"

In a provincial theatre, during the performance of a melodrama, an excited woman threw her bonnet at the "villain" on the stage who was strangling one of the characters. The applause following her action was uproarious, most of it coming from the gentleman who sat immediately in the rear of the bonnet.

"If I am wakeful at night," said the author, "I always put myself to sleep by following out, in my mind, the thread of some one of my poems from the beginning. Presently the verses become confused, and before long I am asleep."

"That's a fact," said the friend enthusiastically; "I can go to sleep over any one of them."

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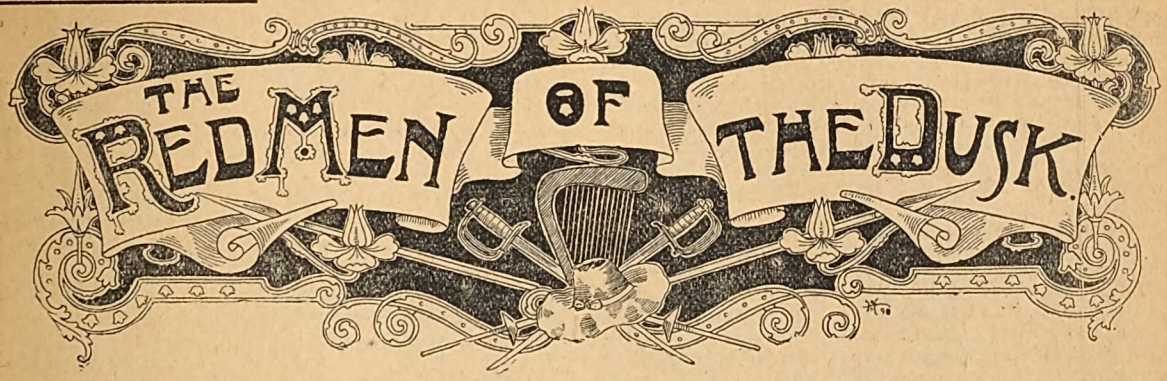
FIFTH INSTALMENT.



A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey. Being mounted on a superior horse the refugee easily shakes off his wretched companions, and at a later period assists two ladies in escaping from a band of thieves. Geoffrey is hospitably entertained by a Welsh farmer, and on resuming this journey he encounters a handsomely dressed Welshman. The latter upbraids the English, and they fight with swords. At a critical moment the duel is stopped by the young girl whom Geoffrey had assisted, and who turns out to be no other than his own cousin. The refugee is welcomed by his uncle, with whom he stops. Geoffrey and his cousins Enid and Owain set out on an errand of mercy and are chased by "The Red Men," who attack the house and are ultimately repulsed. Geoffrey, who goes in pursuit of them, is shot in the head from the house, and suspects his uncle of the deed. Six Red Men are captured and hanged.

CHAPTER XII.

I Take the Road Again.

Up to this moment I had been popular with my uncle's followers, but within an hour of leaving the little wood I found that I had almost as many enemies at Nant-y-Bryn as there were people in the place. On every side I was met by scowling looks, and those who had a little English treated me to their impudence when it came in my way to speak to them. They were as frightened as their master at the Gwylliard Cochion, and as fully inclined to be ferocious and cruel.

I could see at once that my interference on behalf of the woman had greatly displeased them, and that their displeasure was reserved for me alone. Owain had, as they reasoned, seconded me to save me, and, besides, he was their familiar and their friend of a thousand days, while I, among so untutored a race, held ground only as Sir Arthur's kinsman. Our encounter in the wood had shown that my uncle had come to regard me with disfavour, and his tenants instantly hastened to range themselves with him. I became speedily aware that, with the exception of Owain and Enid Vaughan and their followers, Siani and the tall, old fellow who had come to misadventure with the Egyptian—his name was Gwilym—I must expect black looks wherever I turned.

This troubled me but little until the afternoon, when I found that the ill-will so suddenly sprung up against me might mean things which would trouble me a great deal. I went into the stable to give a look to Whitesock's comfort, as I did twice or thrice every day, and at the instant I entered, I saw a man strewing litter at the further end where she was. Whitesock is always uneasy when strangers approach her closely, and she edged away from the man to the other side of her stall. She was sidling about, but without the slightest show of viciousness, of which she has none, or temper, when the brutal fellow swung up a clumsy wooden bucket standing near at hand, and dashed it across her face at the full sweep of his arm. She gave a mingled scream of pain and anger, and the man leapt back straight into my arms as I flew up. Trembling with rage, I seized him round the waist and flung him from me, without looking where I cast him.

His head crashed against the wall, and down he dropped in a heap. Whitesock was plunging furiously at her halter, but became as still as a lamb when she heard my voice, and turned to me, a steady stream of blood trickling from her nostrils. As I caressed her and quieted her there was a clatter of feet behind me, and two or three men came in, attracted by the noise the mare had made.

They picked up their companion and carried him outside, and in a moment I heard his voice. The rattle of his head against the stones of the wall had stunned him for a short time, but now he was telling his story. I entertained no doubt that his story took a turn to his own side, and if I had done so, the faces which looked on the mare and myself from door and window would soon have changed my mind. I ran my hand soothingly over Whitesock's shoulder and reviewed the situation.

The enmity of my uncle and his retainers was making Nant-y-Bryn no pleasant place of refuge. It is true that my heart plucked at me to hold a footing on almost any terms in the place where Enid Vaughan lived, but at terms which did not hold with a gentleman's credit and dignity I could scarcely stand. It was certain that I should become a still keener object of dislike after the tale went about the groom's fellows, of the manner in which I had handled him, and the confusion of languages served his turn and hindered me from putting myself right.

"I must go to Sir Arthur," thought I, "and explain this affair," and I slipped Whitesock's halter so that she was free in her stall. No one would venture to assault her while she was loose, and I went to the house. My uncle had been crossing the courtyard as I went to the stables, but he had avoided speaking to me, and I now sought him

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in his library. I was about half-way down the hall to the door, when a voice which I had difficulty in recognising as Owain's broke out into a shrieking fury of declamation.

"I," the voice screamed, "I—I. A Welsh gentleman of pure descent."

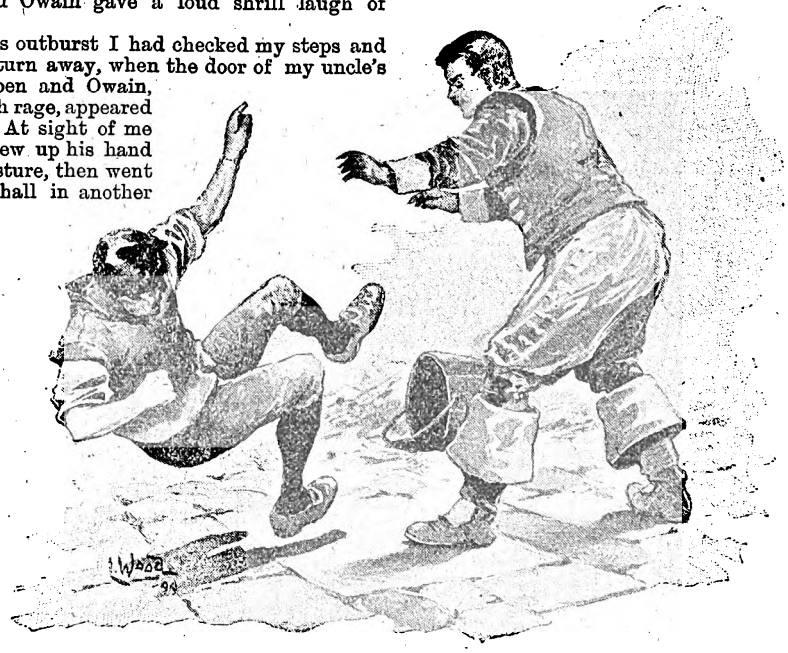
I could almost have smiled, for, whenever Owain was very furious he always stood upon his lineage. But this was no smiling matter. He seemed nearly inarticulate with rage, and was crying out in English, always used in particular conversation as a precaution against servants picking up information:

"You dare to propose this to me? You—you—"

Anger seemed to choke his voice, and there was a soft murmur as of someone else rapidly speaking in a low tone, then the scream broke forth again.

"Other lives to offer as a sop to the authorities? 'Tis blacker and blacker; other traitors! You dare to say the word traitor!" and Owain gave a loud shrill laugh of contempt.

Upon hearing this outburst I had checked my steps and and was about to turn away, when the door of my uncle's room was burst open and Owain, his face flaming with rage, appeared on the threshold. At sight of me he stopped and threw up his hand with a dramatic gesture, then went swiftly across the hall in another direction. Behind him came Sir Arthur, his fingers outstretched, as if to grasp Owain and draw him back, but when he saw me he darted out of sight. It was certainly very awkward to come upon them in the midst of some quarrel, but, as I had shown myself, it seemed to me best to get over with what I had come to say, and I went into the room.



I seized him round the waist and flung him from me.

I found that my uncle had returned to his accustomed seat, and was staring, with shaded eyes, into the fire. I told him plainly what had happened, expecting some petulant outburst; but he heard me without a word. I finished my speech and stood silent, but he neither lifted his head nor spoke. I waited a little while, then left him, and crossed the hall in the direction which Owain had taken. I glanced into the room where meals were spread, and found it empty. A huge turf fire was piled on the wide cavernous hearth, and I walked up to it and stood staring into its glowing depths, pondering over my future movements, when the door opened and someone entered. It was Enid Vaughan. She came towards me with slow, steady step, the firelight shining on her beautiful face, her soft, dark glance meeting mine earnestly and sadly. I bowed, and hastened to draw a chair forward for her, but she stopped me with her hand.

"Master Heathcote," said she, in her low, clear voice, "you must not stay in Nant-y-Bryn. You are in danger here."

"Are we not all in danger?" said I.

"I was not thinking of those wretched creatures who attacked us yesterday," she said. "Surely they received too dreadful a punishment to be dangerous any more. You are in especial danger."

"Not only here, but everywhere else," said I.

Her kind, sweet eyes filled with pity, and she lifted her hand a little, then let it fall again.

"Have you no friend who will shield you—you who have only followed a sacred duty?" said she.

"I came here in that hope," replied I, "but——" I hesitated a moment, and she asked me in her quiet, direct fashion: "Do you feel yourself safe here, Master Heathcote?"

"Frankly," said I, "I do not, Mistress Vaughan. My uncle's bullet skimmed my brain-pan too closely last night for me to feel at ease."

"How do you know it?" cried Enid in a low, eager voice. "Oh, how glad I am to find you warned. I scarce knew how to tell you. But to hear that you know!" She stopped and drew a long sigh of relief.

"I cannot answer clearly for the manner in which it has been impressed upon me," I replied. "I know that I lay down last night too confused to think of anything, and that I woke up firmly convinced that his hand and no other fired the shot."

"Siani saw it all," said Enid Vaughan. "Siani saw him running to the door with a carbine in his hand. Perhaps he meant at first to fire at the enemy. It is certain that he laid the piece deliberately for you."

"I have it now," I answered. "It was his face as he peered into the ditch which has been running through my thoughts and guiding me to a sure end," and I told her of what I had seen.

"Why should he offer to do such a dreadful thing?" she asked. "You, his nearest kinsman, and fighting bravely for him."

"Not for him," said I, "I thought only of your safety."

A faint, beautiful colour rose into her face and she went on. "Siani told me of it last night after I had seen you, and I scarce know what to do. Now she comes with other news, and I dare not let you remain ignorant of your danger. These people would——"

She stopped, and I nodded my head.

"I understand," I replied. "Let him but lift his finger and they——"

I stopped in turn, and she drew a long breath and said "Yes," softly.

"I could not let them mishandle the unfortunate woman, at any rate," said I. "I do not blame myself there."

"Oh, no, no," said she, "poor, unhappy creature. To kill her child before her eyes!" She shuddered, and fell silent.

"And now," said I, "this fellow's broken head will crown my enormities." And I told her of my recent adventure in the stable.

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Her face clouded and she opened and shut her hand nervously.

"They think so little of taking a dreadful revenge for a punishment, even when they are in the wrong," she said.

"I have seen enough of them to be sure of that," I returned, "and there is nothing for it but boot and saddle." The door opened again and Owain came in. He had now regained control over himself, but his countenance was still flushed, and bore traces in the dilated eye and quivering nostril of the recent quarrel in which he had been engaged. He came straight up to us, and leant his arm upon the huge oaken beam which ran across the head of the fireplace.

"Master Heathcote," he said, "have you any other place where you could lie in safety? Because I must tell you plainly, for the friendship I bear you, that you are not safe here."

"Owain!" cried his sister, in astonishment at this confirmation.

"It is too true, Enid," he said, mistaking her surprise. "I would a thousand times that there were no need to give this warning, but there is."

The door opened once more, and Sir Arthur Vaughan came in with soft step and downcast eye. He shuffled up to the fire where we stood, and spread his thin hands to the blaze. His idea, clearly enough, was to be present when Owain and I spoke together; and as we could scarcely make it plain that his presence was not required in his own room, we remained silent. Enid went away at once, and my uncle pursed his lips and stared into the fire reflectively, as if he had merely come to await the meal which was shortly afterwards put on the table. This was dispatched almost in silence, and upon its conclusion I withdrew to my own room, and began anxiously to plan my next steps.

After some thought I resolved to strike across into Herefordshire, where I had friends who would receive me. I had hung in the wind at first between them and Nant-y-Bryn, but had finally chosen the latter as the safer spot.

However, any port in a storm, and I carefully loaded my pistols, took my cloak from the hook where it had been hanging since Siani gave it back to me, and made up my mind to set out that very night. It was clear, hard, frosty weather, a bright moon, and Whitesock had not moved a hoof for a couple of days. We could go far before daybreak, and so much the better, for the roads would be quiet. I had lately ridden much about the surrounding country with Owain, and knew which way to march. I had just made an end of my preparations, when a tap came at the door and Owain himself appeared.

"My dear Heathcote," said he, in a tone of deep vexation, "I am more ashamed than I can tell you of the turn which affairs have taken. It seems traitorous to be glad to see you go—for I perceive your preparations—after the fashion you stood shoulder to shoulder with me last night. But I can only say to you that I am rejoiced that you have put my hint into practical service. I cannot tell you one-tenth of the things I would, for I have bound myself with a vow of confidence, given carelessly, and without dreaming of what it would cover."

"You!" I cried, as he paused; "do not dream for an instant that I could connect you with this awkwardness. I would trust my life in your hands a hundred and a hundred times. But, as you hint, there are other people in the matter, and too many for one to stand against."

"You are only too right," he replied gloomily, "and this, a refuge of a thousand, is denied you."

"Fear nothing for me," I answered. "I shall cross the marshes into Herefordshire, and lie for awhile in quarters as safe as good friends can make them."

His eye brightened, and his brow cleared.

"You have somewhere to go?" he cried. "Heaven be praised! It has lain like lead at my heart to think you must go out into danger alone."

"The danger, I fear, is on your side," said I. "Suppose these savages make another descent upon you. I would give my left hand to be here to help."

"Their sting is drawn," returned Owain. "Eleven slain and some of them, for a surety, wounded. It is more likely that we shall run them to their holes and root out this ancient mischief."

I was about to speak again, when Owain laid a finger on his lips and looked at me with such wide-opened eyes and face of earnest warning that I remained silent. His ears, keener than mine, had caught a sound without, and he made two or three sharp steps in the room as if approaching the door. Then he stopped dead and listened. I listened also and heard nothing save a single, faint creak. Never a sound of a footfall came to my ears, only the give of a board under someone's weight as they sped away. Owain returned to my side.

"I would dispense with a leave-taking of your uncle, if I were you," he said drily, "and, above all, not a word again to me or to anyone else of where you think of going."

I buckled on my sword, and, of set purpose, took out my purse, and ran over the considerable stock of gold it still contained. I knew he had no money to offer to supply me with for my journey, and I knew also that he was troubled because he had not. The sight of my well-filled purse set him at ease, though not a word of it was spoken between us. We went downstairs and out to the stable. Whitesock whinned her shrill delight as I began to prepare her for the road, and Owain helped with a will. I glanced across the courtyard time and again, and at last saw Enid Vaughan standing at the door which led to the hall, and looking across to the building in which we were. I left Owain to lead the mare out, and crossed at once to the young lady.

"And is it good-bye, then, Master Heathcote?" she said. "I fear the remembrance of Nant-y-Bryn will be but a gloomy stain upon your memory. You have been treated——" she paused, and her lip curled in proud shame.

"Oh, no, no," I said, "not you—not Owain. I shall remember every moment I have spent with you as the happiest of my life."

My heart was so full, and she seemed so moved at my going, that I was on the point of uttering my dearest thought, when I checked myself and bit my lips into silence. I had lost the whole of my heart to Enid Vaughan, and loved her as I had never conceived it possible for one human being to care for another. But to say so, I, a fugitive on the face of the earth, what had I to offer? It was for Enid that I was flying again now. If I remained to run the gauntlet of my uncle's ferocious retainers, what chance would remain to me of coming back, mayhap, in more fortunate times to say what I dared not say now?

"You are going into the night," said Enid, "and here, the night is the time of danger."

"I do not fear, indeed," I replied, "with Whitesock under me. Nor do I think that the Red Men of the Dusk will be moving after their late terrible lesson."

There was a rattle of hoofs behind me, and Whitesock, plucking the reins from Owain's loose grip, cantered across the courtyard, and laid her head over my shoulder.

"She will bear me away, now," I said, in a low voice, "but be sure, oh, be sure of this, that should a luckier day dawn for me, she shall carry me swiftly back."

Enid became very pale, but gazed upon me with a clear, steady look in her great, dark eyes. I bent over her hand and kissed it, and in an instant she was gone. No matter, I turned away with a heart full of joy and pride. Upon the truth of that look, my heart was founded as upon a rock.

From door, from window, from porch, curious faces looked out at me as Owain threw open the gate of the courtyard. I held his hand in a firm, warm grip for an instant, then swung myself into the saddle and paced out to the road. We exchanged the barest words of farewell, for there were too many inquisitive ears about to say more, and I rode away from Nant-y-Bryn.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Stolen Letter.

The night was falling fast as I rode slowly down the uneven mountain way, and with every streak that died out of the western sky, the moon brightened and brightened in the east. She was well up, and cast a strong silver light over the thin white mist which clung to the hollows of the hills and lay thicker over the marshy places.

The air was keen and piping, Whitesock moved like music under me, and at twenty-four one's spirits do not naturally fall to the doleful side. I thought sweetly and strongly of the treasure I was leaving behind in Nant-y-Bryn; I caught my breath with a gasp of delight when I recalled the look with which my last words had been received, and I fell to building castles in the air, that pastime dear to young hopes. I was, it may be, three miles from Nant-y-Bryn, when, of a sudden, there burst into my head, like a peal of bells, the words Owain had cried out to my uncle: "Other lives to offer as a sop to the authorities."

Their quarrel was of a surety about myself. What had Sir Arthur been proposing to him? "Other lives!" My heart turned to lead within me, and I drew rein. Whitesock stopped at once, and I tore off my cloak and thrust my hand inside my coat. My heart fell lower, and I stripped off the coat also and laid it on the croup before me; and, with trembling fingers, searched again and again in the secret pocket beneath the arm-pit. It was empty, and I saw what it all meant. I cursed myself for my foolish carelessness, and groaned aloud.

From boyhood I had had two great friends, Roger Brent and John Locking. We had always marched together. We rode south the three of us towards Penonddock. We had all three fought under Sir George Booth at Chester, and run away, still in company. We had all gone into the last affair, and the word I had to fly came from Roger, who had got wind of Sir John Postgate's intentions.

I remembered well the hasty words scrawled on a scrap of paper, and sent by a sure hand. "All is known," he wrote, "and 'off' is the word. I shall get a cast over to Waterford, and lie at the old spot. Jack is riding as his cousin's lackey to Devon. Farewell, dear lad, till better times."

At the time of receiving this letter I had no means of safely destroying it as several people were about, and I had thrust it into the secret pocket of my riding coat, a pocket I had had contrived, in which to carry important papers on a journey. I called to mind how I had blamed Roger in my own thoughts for writing so openly of intended movements, but he was a feather-headed fellow, whom Jock and I both loved, and were continually getting out of scrapes. Yet whom dare I now blame for carelessness when it was borne in on me that I had utterly forgotten to destroy the letter, and it was now gone.

In whose hands was it? I had no doubt at all upon that point. What use would be made of it? I had no doubt there either, and I groaned again. We had been marked men since Winnington Bridge, and short work would be made of us should we fall into the hands of those who held power. All these thoughts, growing thick and fast upon me, threw me into a veritable stupor, and I sat stock-still staring at a great boulder just before me beside a turn of the way.

A bright shining streak thrust itself over the edge of the rock in my direction, and I gazed at it mechanically. Matters remained thus for some moments, when a grim chuckle broke upon my ears, and, with a great start, I came to myself. I was bitterly cold, the mare was shivering in the chill breeze, and the shining streak was the moonlight glinting along the barrel of a carbine pointed directly at my breast. I ran my eye up to the stock and recognised the face peering at me, and an impulse came upon me to speak to him, to anyone, to hear my own voice.

"Ieuan," said I. "Ieuan, I am in a hard place."

"You are meaning, perhaps," said he, "that you fear I am a straight shot."

"Your shot!" said I, feeling all the careless contempt I put into my voice. "If I had no more than that to trouble me, I should be a happier man than I am now."

"Well," said he, "you are a strange young man. But there was something in my heart which said 'no,' when I saw a good chance to shoot you and take the beautiful horse. Will you promise not to ride off, nor to draw a pistol on me if I come to talk with you."

"I will," said I, and he dropped the long carbine he was carrying into the hollow of his arm at once. I flung on my coat again, and drew the left-hand rein.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Back to Nant-y-Bryn," said I.

"Why?" asked Ienan. "And why are you going away?"

I left both questions unanswered. His first question was already one to which I was seeking an answer in my own mind, and I could not give it. To what end should I return? Would Sir Arthur yield up the letter, or confess to any knowledge of it? I knew it was foolishness to expect any such thing, and I halted again in perplexity.

"You have quarrelled with him," said Ieuan sharply. "You are leaving him in anger; you are finding that he iss a bad man."

I nodded, but said nothing.

"What has he taken from you?" next demanded Ieuan. It was clear that he had been watching me since I halted, and his keen wits were threading my actions on the right string.

"A letter," said I; "a letter which I would have given all the world that no one should have seen."

"And can he make a mischief with that letter in Nant-y-Bryn?"

"No," I replied; "but he can put it in the right hands, I fear."

"And where are they?"

"In Worcestershire."

"Then he can do nothing!" Ieuan slapped the stock of his piece triumphantly, and I started once more, as if from a dream, and I began to rub the mist from my wits. His questions had been so jumping with my thoughts that I had answered them half-unconsciously, and now I began to bethink myself where I stood. Here was the fellow whose throat I had done my best to cut last night, putting query after query to me like a father-confessor, and I was giving docile answers. I ran my mind swiftly over what had been said, and found nothing further to reproach myself with; then looked for the first time with clear-seeing eyes at Ieuan Gwyllt. He stood with one hand leaning on the mare's shoulder, his keen, fierce eyes riveted on my face, and reading my thoughts—so keenly intuitive is this race—as a man reads an open page.

"You gave me a chance," said he, "when that woman jumped on my shoulders. I gave you a chance last night and we were level. But you stood by old Megon this morning, and I am thinking of that now. It has held my finger from the trigger, but never mind, let us consider this letter. Can he use it to make a profit to himself?"

"Ay, that he can," said I, as my mind began to sum up things clearly for the first time. I had been so full of thoughts of Enid Vaughan, so occupied with the bustle of things of late, that I had never fairly set myself to working out the meaning of my uncle's conduct. I now saw with what hopes he had launched that bull t at me. Had it been an inch or so lower in its flight, surely an ounce of lead had never been put out to greater interest, for it would have meant his accession to the fair estate he coveted so eagerly; it would have meant safety, wealth, a great posi-

tion, and all secured so easily by the death of one already proscribed, already fugitive. Who was there to inquire, or to care, where or how I had come to my end? And then his peace to be made with the authorities by delivering up my hapless friends. With what patient care must he have searched my clothes while I slept, for I had no other coat, and wore it constantly by day.

"And the letter is of no use to him in Nant-y-Bryn?" went on Ieuan.

"None," said I.

"He must send it or carry it to someone else?"

"He must!"

"And will it be best for him to do that soon?"

I perceived Ieuan's drift, and thought for a moment. Had he already made use of the information? I felt sure he had not. I had gained enough knowledge of the household to be pretty certain that no one had been dispatched since my arrival, and then his fear of reducing the garrison had made in my favour so far. Now his fear would be greatly relieved, and the news was not of a nature to keep. My friends might shift their quarters.

"It will," said I.

"What will the letter do for him?" persisted Ieuan.

"It will furnish him very likely with means to remove from this country," said I, "and place him in safety far from the Red Men of the Dusk."

Ieuan ground his teeth wickedly, and tugged at his great red beard.

"He cannot send it by a bird in the sky," said Ieuan, "and I will make that the only safe way to him."

Here was an unexpected ally, and one of whose power I had no doubt. Ieuan stared thoughtfully along the thread of road running white in the moonlight across the swart moor, for the land on either side was wet peat-bog, where the snow did not lie.

"The moon will not be much higher before we have that paper," he said at last.

"Supposing he comes this way," I returned, following his unspoken argument.

"I have been thinking of that," replied Ieuan, "and he will not come this way. We shall be doing well if we go and place ourselves on the way that he must come."

I was willing enough, and Whitesock wheeled round and trotted directly back, Ieuan loping at my side and talking easily as he ran.

"Will it be Owain who goes?" he asked.

"Never," said I, "never in the world."

"I am glad of that," said Ieuan. "But whoever will go will start on a tall horse for so long a journey as that, and not on a mountain pony. Now for such a horse there is but one road from Nant-y-Bryn."

"Then we must be on it," said I.

"We are too far on it," replied Ieuan; "that is why we are going back. Two miles from the house another little way turns off, and he could go up that."

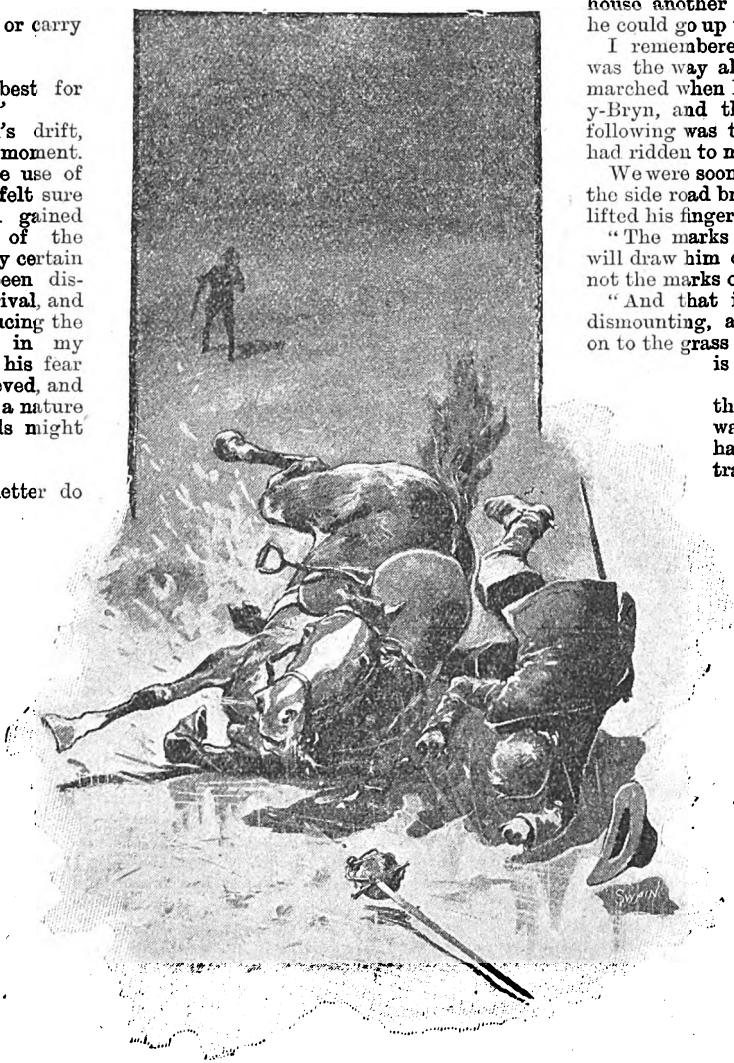
I remembered it as he spoke. It was the way along which I myself had marched when I first approached Nant-y-Bryn, and the track we were now following was the one by which Owain had ridden to meet me.

We were soon near the point at which the side road branched away, and Ieuan lifted his finger for me to draw rein.

"The marks of her feet going away will draw him on," said he, "but not—not the marks of her feet coming back."

"And that is truth," returned I, dismounting, and leading Whitesock on to the grass beside the road. "Here is the place."

Just at the point where the roads forked together was a thicket of mingled hazel and holly, with tracks beaten through it where cattle and ponies had pushed their way. I led the mare into the depths of the clump where the shelter was good, laid my cloak over her loins, and then stepped forward to join Ieuan, who had gone to the further side and was examining the narrow road.



Horse and man rolling over and over in a crumpled heap.

CHAPTER XIV.

It may seem strange that I should have put such instant faith in Ieuan Gwyllt, but so it was, and I marched with him as contentedly and as easy in my mind as ever I accompanied any man. For one thing, I had met him twice at sword-point, and been beaten both times, so that I held him in much respect; and, again, I knew enough of his character from his old acquaintances to be sure that while our interests jumped together his hand would never be turned against me. Further, I was desperate to prevent mischief happening to my friends, and would have ventured upon no small danger to intercept the billet which I was well assured my uncle would dispatch at the earliest possible moment. So I crossed over to him, and peeped over his shoulder at the pathway.

"There iss no sign of man or horse passing," said he, hearing the crunch of my feet on the snowy grass. "But he will come—yes, he will come."

"What makes you so certain?"

"For the same reason, I am sure that someone has already spoken to you," returned Wild John, in his stiff, formal English, "that it iss good to start at once, before the Gwylliard Cochion begin once more to move about the country."

I laughed to see how keenly he summed up things, and he continued:

"How much powder and ball iss with you?"

"Little enough," I answered. "About four charges. I thought it would be enough for the road."

"Little, indeed," said he. "This gun iss loaded, and I have enough to load it once again; that iss all."

"Never mind," said I, "plenty to knock the man's horse from him."

Ieuan turned his head, and bared his strong white teeth in a contemptuous grin. "And do you think," said he, "and do you think we should spend powder on the job? And there is so little with us. Not likely."

"What will you do?" I asked.

"I will show you," he returned; "and it iss time to be about it, too."

He went back through the thicket, crossed the main road twenty yards below the fork, and marched in the direction of Nant-y-Bryn. I followed like his shadow, and two hundred yards or more from the thicket he stopped. We had been moving parallel with the road, but five or six yards from it, out on the wide grassy margin. At the place where we stood the road bed, for some ten or twelve yards, was formed by a smooth sheet of living rock. Such strips are common enough in all that country-side, where the rock crops up in every place, and in wet or slippery weather they demand very wary riding. But, in spite of the snow and frost, the roads were now not slippery, for the skin of snow had fallen on clear, hard, dry earth, and it had never melted, nor was it deep enough to clog a horse or ball under his feet.

I sprang forward and caught his arm.

Ieuan looked round, then went with hasty stride to a black gash in the moor where a turf pit had been opened. Before the frost came on it had been filled with water almost to the brim, and a couple of blows from his heavy heel shattered the ice. He whipped off his hat and filled it with the dark water which came welling up, then ran swiftly to the road and dashed it on the broad riband of smooth rock.

I hastened to help him. Every hatful of water, as it was flung down, spread like a blot, then stood, a hard, black plate of ice. On so bitter a night it froze almost as it fell, and within a quarter of an hour we had a band of ice as hard as iron, and catching the moon like a mirror.

We wrung our hats as dry as we could, then buffeted our hands round our waists to get the life back into the numbed fingers.

"If it iss a mountain pony, it will run over this like a fox," said Ienan, "and then you will have to ride after him and catch him. If it is a tall horse, I will send him down to that ice so that he is most likely to roll in a heap."

"Why," said I, "the fellow will be killed!"

"And a sword?" said Ienan, "a sword and a pistol? Perhaps they do not kill."

"True," said I. "I might have to use rough persuasion."

"He also will have good arms," said Ieuan; "be sure of that. And Gruffydd will use them, too."

"Gruffydd?" I said. "Do you mean that big, dark man with the sword cut on his cheek? Why do you name him?"

"And have you not seen him following that bad old man as a dog follows his master?" demanded Ieuan. "He will come as sure as we stand here."

He turned and went on up the gentle slope which rose from the thicket. The rest of the rise was scarce fifty yards from the spot where the ice-trap lay, and from this point we looked out along a flat, open stretch, lying silent and desolate under the moon.

"I shall jump from behind the bush and try to beat him from the horse with my gun," went on my companion; "but there is no good cover handy, and it is likely I shall miss. Then you must stop in the bottom with your horse, and cut him off if he passes the ice."

"Ay, ay," said I, and beat my hands again, for at present I could handle nothing surely. Then I went back down the hill to look to Whitesock, and found her standing like a lamb under cover of the thick bushes, but making a soft, whinnying noise for joy to see me again. I walked her gently up and down for an hour or more, without sight or sound of anything happening up the hill; then secured her again, spread the cloak carefully over her, and went up the slope.

Just as I neared the top, Ieuan rose out of a patch of brake in which he had settled himself, and I saw his beckoning finger against the sky. I ran at once, and he pointed to the distance. The night was still and windless, and the silence intense. I listened eagerly, yet heard nothing. I shook my head, but Ieuan wagged his shock of hair with the completest confidence, and I bent my ear to its task again. Yes, I had it now. The sound of clinking hoofs, faint and far, and swiftly beating on the iron road.

"I am right—yes, I am always right," said Ieuan softly, as proud as a peacock over the way in which his forecast was coming true. "He iss coming—he iss coming!"

"I will get back to my post," said I, and away I ran down the hill. I led Whitesock to the edge of the bushes and

swung myself into the saddle and waited, with my eye fixed upon the ridge above clear in the moonlight.

The rider was no laggard, for I had been ready but a short time when I heard the clang of hoofs rattling up to the ridge. Suddenly, horse and man shot into sight, and, upon the instant, a dark figure leapt at them with a wild scream. The horseman must have driven his spurs home at the sound, for the swift canter was exchanged for a furious gallop. The big, powerful horse he was riding came down the hill with terrific leaps, bound upon bound, and one of these carried him clean upon the trap of ice. It worked to a miracle. The shoes of the horse were somewhat smooth, as we found afterwards, and shot out from under him like skates, and down he went, horse and man rolling over and over in a crumpled heap. Ieuan had followed hard upon their heels and now ran in and had the horse at once by the head. It got to its feet, trembling but unhurt; the man lay quite still. In a trice Ieuan had secured the horse to a neighbouring bush, and was back at my side, for I had now come up and was turning the man over on his back.

"Gruffydd it iss," said Ieuan. "And where iss the paper?"

"He is not dead," said I, laying my hand on the messenger's heart.

"Dead!" said Ieuan with scorn. "And why should he be dead with falling from a horse? But the senses are out of him, and that is very useful for us."

Without another word he turned to his task, and deftly stripped off the great horseman's coat in which Gruffydd was wrapped. This he tossed aside as a very unlikely place for a letter to be stowed away in. Next came a very thick, woollen doublet, which Ieuan whipped off as neatly, and set about searching. He took his long knife and ripped it here and ripped it there, but no letter came to light, and after a few moments search, he flung that aside also. In a twinkling, and with a dexterity of which I had never seen the like, he had the shirt of Gruffydd off, and in his hands, allowing the naked body of the messenger to fall back upon the icy slab of rock as if he was handling a wooden figure.

At the second cut of the knife, he gave a guttural cry of satisfaction. He had ripped open a small bag-like fold of the shirt, pleated close to the neck, and out came a folded letter. He handed it over to me, and I had it open at once.

I held it up to the moonlight, but could make out nothing. Ieuan had flint, steel, and tinder, and he struck a light. It was all right. We had the letter safe enough. It gave the information which could be gathered from the note of which I had been robbed, and was addressd to Sir John Postgate. No name was signed to it, but an ingenious and complicated device was drawn with a pen. This would serve to prove who had written the letter, since the writer alone would know how it was signed, and yet, should it fall into the wrong hands, no trace of the writer's identity would be furnished.

"This is it," I cried.

"Then there iss with us all we are wanting, and Gruffydd iss of no more use," said Ieuan. He bent over the prostrate, half-naked figure, took a handful of the great black beard in his clutch, and tossed the head back, baring the hairy throat. Upon this naked throat he laid the edge of his keen knife, and, with a turn of his wrist, was about to slit it from ear to ear, when I sprang forward and caught his arm with both my hands, crying: "No, no!"

Ieuan turned his head and looked at me inquiringly for a moment, then rose and thrust his knife into its sheath.

"Yes," said he, "you are right; you are quite right. I am seeing your meaning; if they shall know that Gruffyd is stopped, they shall start somewhere else, and perhaps we are not there to catch that one."

It was clear that Ieuan had not divined the impulse of humanity which forbade me to stand by and see the poor wretch's throat cut for doing his master's errand and bidding; but his keen wits had furnished a reason for not proceeding with the murder of his enemy. What better evidence could be given to Sir Arthur that his mission had failed than the finding of the dead body of his messenger?

"He must be a prisoner with us," said Ieuan, and forthwith began dressing the man again.

Gruffydd came to his senses as Ieuan was fastening his doublet about him, and looked round upon us vacantly, uttering low, uneasy cries. I brought the horse and he was set upon it, after his broadsword and a pair of pistols had been taken from him. Ieuan ripped off a strip of the prisoner's coat with a knife and bound his feet together under the horse, then seized the rein and struck away at once into the moorland.

(To be continued.)

We have seen a Spanish working-men's journal which, below its title, bears the legend, "Published as often as there are funds in hand."

A good-looking girl, whose lover asked her in the tenderest tones why it was that she was so magnetic, explained the phenomenon by informing him that her mother and father were both telegraph operators.

"Pity a poor blind man with a large family!" cried a wayside beggar.

"And how many children have you, unfortunate man?" asked a lady in great concern.

"How can I tell, madam? I can't see 'em."

When someone applied to Lord Melbourne for an order to wear a foreign decoration, he expressed a doubt whether the applicant had established any claim to it. The answer of a friend was:

"The fact is, he is a very dressy man, and would show it off exceedingly well."

First Tramp: "It's harrud to find nice, easy jobs, Bill."

Second Tramp: "You said yestiday you'd got one—nuthin' ter do but sit in an easy chair an' keep still, that's wot the man told you. Why didn't you stay in that soft place?"

First Tramp (dolefully): "That there man was a dentist, and he wanted to 'xperiment with a new tooth pulling machine."

Mrs. Wilton: "I have not heard from your daughter since she married the foreign count."

Mrs. Bilton: "She is very unhappy."

Mrs. W. "Too bad; but such matches usually are unfortunate."

Mrs. B.: "Indeed they are. You see the poor girl knows so little of foreign languages that she drops back into English every time she gets angry, and then her husband can't understand a word she says."

An amateur is discussing with a dealer the price of a set of old china.

"But," says he, "it's too dear. There is not a piece in the set that has not been broken and mended."

"Why, sir," says the dealer, "that is what makes its value." Then, slowly and impressively—"That is the set Napoleon dashed to the floor when he was enraged at the defection of Bernadotte."

"Dear me! Is that so? Are you certain of it?"

"Positive—perfectly sure. But if you prefer it intact, I have the same set unbroken."

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The Murder Room.

I AM an excessively nervous person and subject to impressions. Not weak—oh! certainly not that! Have I not shown how I can cling to a purpose? But I am susceptible to surrounding influences, and so sensitive that an atmosphere has power to inspire or depress, a personality to charm or antagonise, and an idea, suggested with sufficient force, to control me.

Lenore and I were perfectly happy together, though no one had wanted her to marry me.

"He has strange ways," her friends said. Lenore had told me this and thrown back her pretty head and laughed at them as she clung to my neck. She loved me always.

We had been married about six months when we began to look for a house. It was great fun, Lenore said, to tramp round together and plan and discuss; but it was a long time before we found anything at all satisfactory.

We exhausted the lists offered by real estate offices, and one afternoon were walking to our hotel, somewhat discouraged, when we passed a pretty little place, marked conspicuously "To Let."

The gate leading into the really large garden swung open at a touch, and we walked round the house examining as well as we might from outside its walls. It was not a modern house.

It was rather low, of one storey, but well finished, with wide porches and big square windows. The shutters of one were half opened, and Lenore pushed them apart and we peered into a small room with shelves running along one wall.

"There is my library," I said, but Lenore exclaimed:

"Why, there is no door in the room!"

"You are mistaken," I cried, looking in again, but though we could see every point of the room clearly, there was no egress apparent but the window through which we gazed.

"It is very strange," Lenore whispered, and her form trembled. "It rather frightens me, Basil," she added half apologetically.

I laughed at her foolish terror, and soon she laughed herself, and by the time we reached the hotel we had decided to get the keys from the agent whose address was given on the bills.

I went alone to see this man the next day. He was a gentlemanly person, whose occupation was not determined by any evidences thereof about his office. He looked curiously at me as I spoke with some enthusiasm of the house, and upon my questioning him he replied that it was his own property. He would go with me, he said, to look over it.

The entrance was exceptionally good, and the hall, running directly through the centre of the house, wide, handsomely panelled in oak and lighted from the roof. There were pretty drawing-rooms, dining-rooms and bedrooms, and no evidence anywhere of the small apartment which we had inspected from the garden.

I spoke of this immediately, and the landlord seemed embarrassed and anxious to avoid my questions. We were just leaving the house, and with some little hesitation he finally asked me to go back to his office; he would tell me there, he said, about this room.

"The price at which I offer you this house," he began, "is singularly low, and, frankly, there is a good reason for it. I have never explained the peculiarity of that room to anyone, because in itself it has always proved sufficient grounds for tenants to reject the house at any price. But the place pleases you and"—here he spoke slowly—"you do not seem a person to be easily frightened. That room has been the scene of several murders."

Naturally I started, but before I could speak he repeated harshly:

"Several murders. This was of course generally known at one time. But the house has been unoccupied for years, the neighbourhood has changed, and the stories about it have gradually been forgotten. For the last tenant I had the room walled up; under the circumstances he did not care to use it. There was something strange about him, too——"

He stopped abruptly, putting the key of the house in my hand, and in spite of what I had heard I accepted it, and promising an answer that day, went slowly back to the hotel.

My desire for the place had somewhat cooled, though I said to myself that I was not superstitious. I should not tell Lenore its strange story—she was so easily disturbed. It was a charming house, and very reasonable. Why not make some excuse to my wife for the sealed room, and, asserting my strength of character, move into the place and build over this grave of many tragedies the happiest of homes?

The sun was bright—the world looked gay. Lenore met me with an expectant face, and the cry:

"Now, Basil, do not say the rent was too high," and smiling at her eagerness, I felt my last doubt melt away before the brightness of her manner, and that afternoon I took from the landlord a lease of the house for twelve months. I told Lenore that the last tenant had been a sort of crank, who having some association with this library had walled it up.

"There is room enough for our present family, little wife," I said, my conscience pricking me for this first deception; and I added, kissing her, "We will open this room, and even add more rooms to the house, if necessity demands."

We moved into our new house, and a week's delightful labour made of it a home as fair as if no black history were hidden beneath its decorations.

"And now," said Lenore, "after the hall we have nothing more to do to this house but to live in it."

We had left the hall until the very last, as one eats a dainty dessert. It had possibilities, with its fine panelling, its big fireplace, and roof of stained glass, and we had some curios in the shape of arms to hang above the mantel-shelf, and one or two bits of rare and valuable old pottery for the panels on either side of the drawing-room door.

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I went out late in the day and met Bronson, an old chum.

"Come home to dine, old fellow," I cried. "Come and see the housekeeping."

He put me off gravely, and said:

"Basil, I must speak to you of something—of this very housekeeping, in fact. Come to my rooms, where we can have a word alone."

I followed him, startled and disturbed. He came directly to the point—he is always direct, Bronson is.

"Have you heard any queer stories about your house?" he asked, and I answered hesitatingly: "Yes," though I tried to seem bluff.

"And are you indifferent?" he asked again, anxiously.

I determined to be quite frank with him—his friendship for me deserved this—and I told him Lenore was ignorant of everything, and that I thought prejudice of this sort absurd.

He interrupted me quickly.

"A prejudice! If it were but that! But the circumstances connected with the death of the last tenant were foundation for something more than prejudice. Only that no direct proof against him could be found, the man who owns the property would have swung for it, and even now, after six years, a reward is offered for any clue to the affair."

He must have seen my utter bewilderment in my face for he continued rapidly:

"The strange room in your house has always been sealed, yet the last tenant was found there dead. The body was removed through the window. The man had been murdered, evidently, by whom, for what purpose, has never been discovered."

My heart sank. What mystery had I wilfully brought into my daily associations? Why, above all, had my landlord lied to me about the sealing of this room? And yet, even at this moment, I felt an indefinable reluctance to give up the house. I could see Lenore flitting through the pretty rooms, the little conservatory, with its delicate ferns and miniature fountain.

She was waiting for me now, perhaps, in the hall we were to put the last proud touch upon this very evening. With a short laugh I broke off my reflections.

"Bronson," I cried, "no more ghost stories."

He looked at me sadly and suddenly putting his hand on mine he said: "Do not risk Lenore."

Truly, Bronson sometimes exceeded the limits of our intimacy. He refused to go home with me, and Lenore and I dined alone.

Immediately afterwards we began to work. I fastened a bracket securely in one of the panels, and changing the position of my ladder I held out my hand for some Japanese weapons.

"Let us cross them here," I said.

"They are in the other room," replied Lenore, running to get them, and absently I tapped the panel before me with the hammer. At first I did not notice that it moved, but suddenly I became aware that with the jar it was gradually slipping aside.

Greatly excited, I pushed it, and, as I had expected, it disclosed the dark interior of the sealed library. Lenore was coming and, yielding to a sudden impulse to conceal from her my discovery, I slipped the panel back in its place.

Taking the swords from her I held them against the wall. Fearing to fasten them there, I said: "Stiff, rather, isn't it? The panel is handsome enough without them."

And Lenore, who thought always as I thought, agreed.

That night while my wife slept I went softly from the room and down the hall. Lighting a lamp, I made my investigation as quietly as possible, found the movable panel, and in a few moments stood in the room where the murders had been committed.

Except for its associations the room was commonplace enough, papered with a cheap paper of Continental design, and otherwise of a pattern that compared unfavourably with the rest of the house.

I placed the lamp in my hand upon the shelves which were moved aside with the panel. They concealed the entrance to the room, I supposed, when in place, and mechanically I pushed them back.

Instantly I realised the folly of what I had done. I remembered the mystery surrounding the room—the number of murders committed there—the fact that no motive had been discovered for the last murder. Bronson had said the body bore no marks of violence.

If it had been but a supposed murder? Others might have found this room, incarcerated themselves, died by starvation, by shutting off all exit as I had done!

In the frenzy which seized upon me, I forgot the window near at hand, forgot that a cry would easily bring assistance. I threw myself violently against the shelves, which slid beneath my weight so rapidly that the lamp was knocked from its place and fell with a crash, fortunately extinguished by the swiftness of descent. Breathless and terrified I sprang into the hall.

Closing the panel I hurried to my room and bent over my wife's bed. She moved, unclosed her eyes, and seeing my face near her own, smiled and fell asleep again.

I lay down beside her and tried, myself, to sleep. Impossible! The memory of my terror possessed me still, though its cause had been but a shadow, and I trembled and shivered with the dread that had been upon me.

Then I began to ponder over the murders. What had been the mysterious history of the last? Why had they all been committed in this one room? And so I tormented myself with futile questioning until the dawn, when I arose, haggard and wearied, and went out into the garden before Lenore had awakened.

Even there the fascination held me, and I spent the hour before breakfast pacing backwards and forwards in front of the window which opened from the library, pausing occasionally to look through it, wondering how and why the murders had been committed there.

Suddenly a thought came to me, and though at first I put it away, it returned and forced other thoughts aside, until at last I gave it place, and before I had left my home that day it had grown into a determination.

I was a lawyer and had already won some distinction in my profession. Why not make it my business to find the clue to this mysterious murder? Who could have a better opportunity than I, beneath the very roof—in possession of a secret entrance to the room evidently unknown to others—with good reasons to suspect the landlord who had deceived me?

The reward was large—such a case meant a reputation. I would do this, I said to myself very quietly. Time for the world to know when I could tell it everything.

All day I questioned widely but cautiously, and by night I was in possession of all facts known to the general public. They convinced me that whatever key to the mystery existed lay in that room. I must examine it thoroughly, and this must be done at night, when Lenore was asleep, as I wished her to remain in ignor-

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ance of the whole matter. With this in view, I discouraged the visits of all friends lest they spoke of the mystery connected with our house, and Lenore, who cared only to please me, gave everyone up.

I also discontinued all newspapers, fearing that even at this late day some allusion to the murder might appear.

Lenore rarely went out now except into the garden, and to-day I can smile and congratulate myself on the way in which I made everything subservient to what grew to be the great purpose of my life.

We retired early. Lenore slept at all times like a tired child, and I was enabled to begin my work of investigation in good season, between eleven and twelve o'clock at the latest. I had lost all terror of the room itself by this time, regarding it, of course, in a professional light, as part of the business in hand.

My one fear was of being discovered at work or even suspected of it. I had the shutters nailed closely shut, "to prevent curious prying," I explained to Lenore, and clinging fondly to me, she had said she was glad; the thought of the room troubled her.

"I would like our home to be free and open, as it is happy, Basil," she said; "free, open, and happy as our lives"; and I, who had long ago become reconciled to the daily deception, hugged myself in real delight at this proof of her perfect trust and the safety of my secret. I had carried into the room a heavy blanket, which I fastened by strong pins over the window in order to conceal all light within the room from the garden.

I had determined to examine closely every bit of woodwork about the library, as the movable panel suggested to me the probability of further peculiarities of a like nature, and I naturally began with the shelves. On the first two I had found nothing whatever, and owing to the necessity for precaution and silence, I worked but slowly, and I had now wasted fully a week. I did not permit myself to be discouraged. I have never been that.

It was as I bent down to examine the third shelf that I became suddenly conscious of observation. That eyes were upon me, I was absolutely sure, but for some strange reason I could not determine from what point of the room I was being observed.

How they seemed to burn into me! They were moving now—they were coming nearer—I could feel their position change. Ah! why could I not define it? and suddenly I felt they were above me, and I knew them, too, that they were Lenore's. I sprang erect to face her where she stood above me!

She was not there!

Baffled, infuriated, I looked round the empty room. That Lenore, of whose profound ignorance of my project I had been so foolishly certain—that my wife, of all others, should have dared to spy upon me! The thought was maddening, the more so that she had so easily escaped my just resentment. She must have gone as she had come, through the panel! How had she opened it while I was at work upon the shelves? How had she closed it so quickly, so softly?

I hastened to my room. I found my wife lying, almost as I had left her, on the bed—her arms flung carelessly above her head. Such slender, delicate arms Lenore had! A little smile was on her lips. What could I think? I believed her so incapable of deception, and I was obliged to persuade myself that after all I had been quite mistaken. But I was unfitted for work, and irritated and disturbed, I threw aside the dressing-gown in which I worked, and went to bed.

All night I lay awake thinking of my great scheme and the fame it would bring me, and though I had tried to check it, a great anger against Lenore took possession of me. I said to myself that nothing could be more annoying than such an interruption. Suppose I had been on the point of discovering something of great importance in the case, and I felt as if in some way I must vent my vexation. I clenched my hands and tossed on the bed until I succeeded in waking my wife.

As she unclosed her large eyes I bent over her and said harshly, "Why did you leave your bed to-night?"

She seemed for a moment bewildered, and then, nestling to my side, she said, "Basil, you are dreaming."

Whether she were deceiving me or not, I felt silence were best, and putting her from me for the first time in our life together, I turned my face away, and, after a long time, fell into a broken and troubled sleep.

At last I dreamt of being engaged in some secret study of vast importance. Aiming repeatedly at a decisive point, I was each time interrupted, and the result of my researches snatched from me. Ever the same one who disturbed me, and ever eluded detection.

Gradually, throughout the dream, my identity changed. I became the owner of the house in which I lived; the spy, who so persistently annoyed me, was the murdered tenant. His murder suggested itself as the only way of freeing myself from him—it seemed excusable, even justifiable, and the work which before had engrossed me for itself became now the means by which I might detect this person in his infamy and punish him.

My opportunity came. At last I saw him! I had him in my grasp; he struggled; my fingers closed about his throat——

I awoke shrieking, "I have found the clue."

It was broad day, my wife stood beside me and passed her hand across my eyes.

"You are ill, dear," she said gently.

It was with difficulty I replied, the impression of my dream was so strong upon me. It moreover suggested a line of thought which seemed to me reasonable, and I longed to be alone to follow it out to what I was sure would be the true solution of the mystery of the murder.

I reassured Lenore. I had only had a bad dream, I said, and she hung over me with pretty fondness as I ate my late breakfast, and I could show no anger towards her. But from that moment I suspected her, and she was never the same to me afterwards.

As I went off to the office I summoned up my thoughts in this way. The landlord of the house had some occupation which he carried out in private. This I had learnt from Bronson. I also learnt that the last tenant, having no family, had let a room to the owner of the property—which fact led to his being suspected of having something to do with the murder.

There was now no doubt in my mind but that he had made use of the sealed library for purposes known only to himself; that the tenant had discovered this and the entrance to the room. Being curious, he had probably watched the man at work, who became conscious, as I had done, of the disturbing influence. He had doubtless been goaded, as I in my dream, into murdering his persecutor.

The whole case appeared clear to me. Now to find out what object carried the man into the library.

So engrossed had I become in this process of investigation that my daily business became impossible, and I found it necessary to leave my office. My days were spent in making researches into cases of a mysterious character.

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People began to look at me askance.

I now passed nearly the entire night in the library. I had conceived the idea that something was buried beneath it, and examining the floor by the aid of a strong glass I had deciphered the marks 7x10.

This greatly elated me. It is true they may have been figures left there by builders, but instinct whispered they were of importance. I secured the necessary tools and began to take up the floor at the point where I saw the figures.

Again I felt that I was being closely observed. I raised my eyes. They fell upon the shelves pushed aside, leaving a wide opening into the hall. I could never have been so forgetful—someone had passed through it.

With a furious cry I bounded into the hall. It was empty and dim. Vanishing through the door of my sleeping room I fancied I saw the edge of a white gown—a woman's night-dress.

I stood within the bedroom. Lenore lay quietly sleeping. My brain boiled at her duplicity. Seizing her by the arm I shook her roughly. "Where have you been?" I cried, as she started up in the bed.

So dead with sleep she feigned to be that she did not know what question I had put to her, but she seemed very frightened and began to cry nervously. I swore to myself that she should not out-do me in cunning, and I soothed her tenderly, saying that she had called out in her sleep and alarmed me.

That she was awake long afterwards I could tell by the restless play of her fingers on the coverlet, her half smothered sighs and restless turning. I felt as if I could kill her, and at last sleep mercifully soothed me into unconsciousness.

I succeeded the next night in removing quite a portion of the floor. In obedience to the figures I cut seven inches in one direction and ten in the other.

The night was oppressively hot and my stooping posture wearisome to a painful degree. I was obliged to pause repeatedly because of a peculiar sensation in my head.

This had, at about this time, given me great annoyance. It was not a pain. It was a sort of rushing blinding feeling—a feeling of being suffocated by great pressure on the brain. It has never left me. To-night it has been even worse than usual. On the evening of which I am speaking I suffered greatly from this trouble, and was also much annoyed by the fear of observation. My previous experiences had made me nervous.

I made strenuous efforts to conquer such a condition, as it seriously interfered with my work. I cannot tell you the number of times I started up, glancing in every direction, expecting to see my wife's dark eyes upon me. I had learnt to hate the look in them, though it was full of tenderness for me. I think I would have ended it all then, had I been sure.

At length, nearly perishing with fatigue, I lifted the piece of flooring, and to my intense excitement I saw imbedded in the earth beneath a small piece of iron. It might have been the corner of a box buried there or a portion of some iron instrument.

I could not move it, and forgetful of the exhaustion which a moment before had overpowered me, I rapidly began sawing the wood round where the bit of iron lay. I could scarcely control my fingers; they shook with nervousness. Several times I laughed aloud in delight, forgetting that I was not alone in the house—that prudence and silence were one. This thought suggested itself later, and a terrible dread came upon me that I had been overheard.

I fancied that Lenore's eyes were once more fastened upon me. I feared to turn my head, and crouched yet more closely to the floor. I could not rid myself of the idea, and, with a great effort, I finally lifted my face and cautiously surveyed the room.

As usual, I saw nothing, and I returned to my work. No sooner had I done so than I felt certain she stood behind me—I could feel her eyes, like coals, burning down into my brain; they were coming nearer—nearer. Fainting with terror of them, I yet summoned courage to confront them, and slowly I turned my face towards them. They were not there!

Again and again this dreadful mockery repeated itself until I was wild with rage and fear and disappointment. Great drops of perspiration rolled from my face, my hands were shaking so that I could not hold the saw.

And then I heard a sound behind me. Motionless, on my hands and knees, I waited. It was a pushing sound; it was, I knew, the panel being opened. It was followed by a rustling and a smothered, startled cry, and then my wife's awful eyes were there, eating into my very soul.

I could not rise to my feet—the rage which took possession of me made me powerless, then came the triumph of having at last detected her.

But perhaps she had already discovered the clue—she would take it from me—I uttered a cry of agony as I saw my cherished plans thus shattered before me and, with a cry, I faced her.

Yes, it was Lenore! She leant against the opened panel, white, shaking with terror, no doubt of being found there. She had on but her night-dress, and her feet were bare on the dark floor. Her black hair lay on her shoulders and against her uncovered neck.

I sprang towards her, and there, in the soft, warm flesh, where the dress had fallen away, I fastened my fingers.

She made no sort of cry or struggle, but into her eyes came the look—ah, I knew it well. Had I not felt it upon me again and again though it had always before escaped my eyes? No love for me, no trust in me, expressed in it, only wild, fearful questioning. Still it confronted me, and though I closed my fingers yet more closely, until her white face was no longer white, and all expression had gone from it, the look was still in her eyes.

And I could not, with all my strength, crush it out. It was there when I laid her on the floor, and I turned her face downwards so that I might see it no longer, and then I seemed to know how it was peering down into the earth to find my secret.

* * * * *

And now I am kept here, in this small cage, where I see no one but a gruff, surly person who brings me indifferent food and leaves my questions unanswered.

I am very patient—patient and quiet. I am only waiting a little while until they shall have taken Lenore away from that room, and then I can go back to the proofs that are waiting there for me.

There is only this man now to annoy me. I hate him. He never takes his eyes from me—he is watching, always watching, and there is something in his look that reminds me of Lenore.

Wilfred Nathan.

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AN ORIGINAL GIRL.

It is "steamer day" at Nassau. If Nassau, like most other civilised places in the nineteenth century had telegraph, or even daily mail communication with the rest of the world, "steamer day" would not mean so much as it now does to its inhabitants and visitors.

The passengers land. Waiting friends rush forward to greet some; others walk through a row of curious faces on either side and up towards the hotel. Small darkies rush about and besiege them with all manner of requests: "Carry your bag, boss?" "Drive for you, boss?" "Does you want a boy, lady?"

By noon the excitement had moderated, and we strolled down to the wharf and pitched silver coins into the clear water thirty feet deep, to see small negroes dive and bring them from the white sand bottom where they lay clearly visible.

I strolled away from my companions, and, passing several small schooners laden with sponges, lying along the wharf—each with two or three ragged children, a negro or two, and perhaps a sallow-faced, scrawny white man, lounging or chewing sugar cane—I came to one cleaner looking than the rest. She was built as all the Bahama schooners, with fine clipper bows, a rounded stern, and small masts and spars. She was neatly painted, and on her stern were the words "Lillian," with her home port, "Watlings Island."

As I stood looking at her, suddenly a young woman came up the companion way and said:

"Good-day."

"Good-day," I answered, "you've come some distance, have you not?"

"Yes," she replied, "from the furthest of the out-islands. I suppose you're from across the sea."

To my affirmative reply, she to my surprise said:

"And how was Irving's Faust? I should so dearly love to see Ellen Terry as Marguerite."

After a moment's pause, during which time I vainly sought to fathom in my mind how a woman on a Bahama Island schooner could have followed London theatrical matters so closely, I gave her my unbiassed opinion of the matter. She was then silent, and I meanwhile had an opportunity to study this Bahama curiosity.

She was about twenty-six years old and was neatly dressed in an inexpensive light material. Her luxuriant hair, of a dark brown colour, was tastefully arranged, and she wore a large-brimmed, but not unbecoming, straw hat, which had evidently seen better days. Although much burnt, I could see her skin was fair and her hands delicately formed. Her expression was one of demure sadness, and after my study I came to the conclusion that she was a more than an ordinarily handsome woman. I decided to continue the conversation.

"May I come aboard?" I ventured to say.

"Certainly," was the reply, "John's gone out to the steamer and I'm keeping watch for him. I should be glad to have you tell me the news. We get little except when we come to Nassau."

"Who is John?" I wondered, "and how much news can people get who only rely on Nassau for it?"

I stepped on board, however, and my fair hostess, excusing herself for a moment, stepped down into the cabin and returned a moment after with two small chairs, which she placed under a small awning which shaded half the cockpit.

She motioned for me to be seated, and I obeyed. There was silence for a moment after we sat down and then my hostess said, speaking very slowly and with evident effort:

"You must think it very strange that I spoke to you and have allowed you to talk to me, but I saw you were a gentleman, and I do grow so lonely and so anxious to see and talk with someone from the great world now and then. The ladies up at the hotel, if I go up there, I do not know, and I suppose I seem queer to them, for they look askance at me, and I haven't the courage to speak to them. John is always so busy when we're here, and besides, John doesn't seem to care for anything but sponges and salt and wrecks."

"Sponges and salt and wrecks?" I asked myself. "What manner of man may John be?"

"Yes," continued my hostess, "it's very lonely on Watlings. You see there are only 675 people on the whole island, and of these only about 300 are white, while I don't suppose there are forty I know. We're 180 miles from Nassau, and although I'm always teasing John to bring me over here, he won't come but three times a year, unless there's a wreck."

"A wreck?" I asked.

"Yes," she went on nonchalantly, "we don't have much luck now-a-days.

"We haven't had a good wreck since the big Spanish steamer went on Eleuthera three years ago."

The situation dawned. My fair friend was the wife, daughter, or sister of a Bahama wrecker—perhaps a pirate.

"What's the matter? You seemed disturbed."

I murmured in a rambling way something about wrecking being a pleasant occupation.

"Oh, I see," and she laughed, and a wonderfully musical laugh it was too. "You are shocked at John's being a wrecker. John doesn't really wreck ships. He merely helps to strip them when they are wrecked."

I felt relieved, but dire memories of childhood tales of false lights and murdered crews, would come in my mind.

"And who is John?" I asked.

"Ah, John is the dearest, sweetest, noblest fellow living—that's John. I'm sure you'd like him."

I tried again.

"Were you born on Watlings?"

"Oh, dear, no. I was wrecked there. Wasn't it romantic to be wrecked on the island Columbus first landed on?"

I mildly remarked that I had been taught Columbus first landed on San Salvador or Cat Island.

"Oh, my, no. You're quite wrong. It's been proved he first came ashore at Watlings. Why, I often, on fine mornings, get John to drive me over to the south-eastern point of the island where it is thought he came ashore. There's the loveliest white beach there, and the broad blue ocean stretches out and away before you as you look eastward. I make John go away, for John isn't romantic, you know, and then I sit down and close my eyes and I see the queer old-fashioned ships with their worn sails, their high stern and the royal banners waving, tossing at anchor beyond the reef; I see the line of boats with flashing oars advancing; I see the dusky Indian forms standing at the edge of the wood, and just above where the surf breaks on the beach I see the old mariner kneel under the banner of Spain, his sword uplifted and his eyes raised to Heaven.

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"Oh, it's a glorious picture, and I never tire of calling it forth. Life on Watlings you see, has its compensations."

As the woman told this story, she unconsciously acted it out, rose from her chair, and with flaming eyes and cheeks, a new and fair Columbus led a fancied band. I had grown deeply interested and I determined to know her history.

"Tell me about yourself," I said, "and how it comes that you, with your evident education and accomplishments, choose to live on a place so remote and lonely as Watlings Island."

She blushed a little, was silent a moment, and then in a low voice said:

"Well, I don't mind telling you. It's not a long story. I see I've given you a wrong impression, for, indeed, although it is lonely at times, I'm really very happy and I wouldn't change places with any woman. I am an English woman, and I was born near London. My father was a civil engineer in good circumstances, and with a twin sister I had every possible advantage of education. My mother died when I was about fifteen and as we had no near relatives we were much with our father. We were near enough to London to run in of an evening to the theatres and the opera; we had a pleasant society of our own; we read much, sang and played a good deal, and rode continually.

"Ten years ago last autumn my father met with a sudden business reverse. He was offered a remunerative post in California, and decided to go there. A ship belonging to a friend of his was just about to sail for the Isthmus; we were offered a passage on her at a low rate, and in three days' time found ourselves at sea. I needn't tell you of the voyage. It was all new and strange to us, of course, and we two girls were the pets of the ship.

"I saw with relief my father, who had broken much under his losses, improve in health and spirits, and as we neared the tropics the glowing sunset skies were emblematic of our hopes of life in the new world.

"We had been out some thirty days when one afternoon as the sun set in a dark bank of clouds and the air was close and sultry, I noticed the Captain looked anxious and heard him say something about the 'Bahama reefs' to the mate.

"That night a hurricane struck us and for hours we were in what seemed a dull grey cavern of water and sky. The ship plunged madly before the gale, and with our father we sat in the cabin, clasped in each others arms.

"The morning broke scarce less dark than the night. Suddenly the wind shifted and the ship righted and seemed to stand quivering, like an over-driven horse. A few minutes passed when, with a wild roar, the storm was on us once more, and we drove madly in another direction. There was a sudden crash, my father sprang, half dragging us toward the companion-way. I saw a huge wall of water rolling down upon us—it fell and all grew dark. I remember a sensation of sinking, of being whirled round, a dull, booming noise in my ears, and I opened my eyes to find myself lying on a sandy beach two rough men looking down on me, while a third and younger one, kneeling beside me, was chafing my hands. Frightened, but too weak to scream, I feebly said:

"'Where am I?'

"'On Watlings Island, Miss,' said the young man.

"'Yes,' said one of the older men, 'and a narrow squeak you had for it, too. If I hadn't thought it was mighty queer seaweed washing in over yon reef, you wouldn't have been talking now.'

"'Where's my father?' I said.

"'With all the rest,' was the reply.

"'Hush!' said the younger man, 'see how weak she is?'

"Then I fainted.

"I woke to find myself on a rude cot in a small cottage, tended by a negress who only spoke a Spanish patois. The wreckers, for such they were, had carried me there. The sun was shining brightly and the storm was over. Days passed, and when I could go about I learnt that I had been the only one saved of the entire barque's crew. The wave that had engulfed her and drowned all but myself had washed me over the coral reef on which the barque had struck. The wreckers on the shore had seen me, and daring the waves, high even between the reef and the shore, had rowed out and rescued me just as I was sinking.

"Utterly crushed as I was, I did not at first realise my position. I was told I could go to Nassau on a schooner in about a month, but I felt no inclination to do aught but stay where fate had thrown me. The young wrecker was very kind to me.

"Meanwhile I grew well and strong in the soft warm air and under the tropic skies. I learnt to like the wild life, and the few white people and all the negroes half worshipped me. One day a schooner brought some papers, and I read our barque had been given up as lost and my name was among those drowned. These papers recalled me to myself and I determined I would go to Nassau, and if I could, thence to England.

"I told the young wrecker, who had become my firm friend and companion, and whom I had taught to read, of my decision.

"'Well, Miss,' he said, 'if you feel it is so, I suppose you're right, but I hate to think of losing you.'

"This and his evident sorrow touched me, and made me think whether in the world to which I was returning I would find such simple, loyal devotion as had here been mine. When the day came for my departure all the inhabitants turned out to bid me farewell. A queen could not have had a more loyal leave-taking than the 'English Miss,' as they called me. The young wrecker went with me. He said he had business in Nassau. That night—a night so soft and sweet it seemed as if storms had never brooded there, the Southern Cross blazing low on the horizon—the wrecker came to where I sat on the deck of the little schooner.

"'Miss,' he said, 'I am nothing but a "Conch," a poor, ignorant Bahama native, but I can't bear to have you go away. We all love you, and I more than all. I must tell you. You know our life is poor and rude that we are far away from the world, but if you won't blame me for even daring to hope, Miss, you know I have the handsomest schooner of the Watlings fleet and the best cottage on the island. I am sure I'd do my best to make you forget your troubles, Miss, and the sponge fishin' is better, Miss, and there's a good many wrecks yet, Miss—and I love you, Miss.'"

Here she stopped and checked herself and blushed.

"Of course you spoke kindly to him," I said, "and told him you were sorry, but he mustn't speak again——"

"Of course I didn't. You're like all men. What's the name of this schooner?"

"Lillian," I replied wonderingly.

"Well, that's my name, and here," as a tall, broad-shouldered, roughly-dressed young man appeared on the wharf, a bunch of roses in his hand, and eyed me curiously, "here's my wrecker, and his name is John."

Ronald Bateman.

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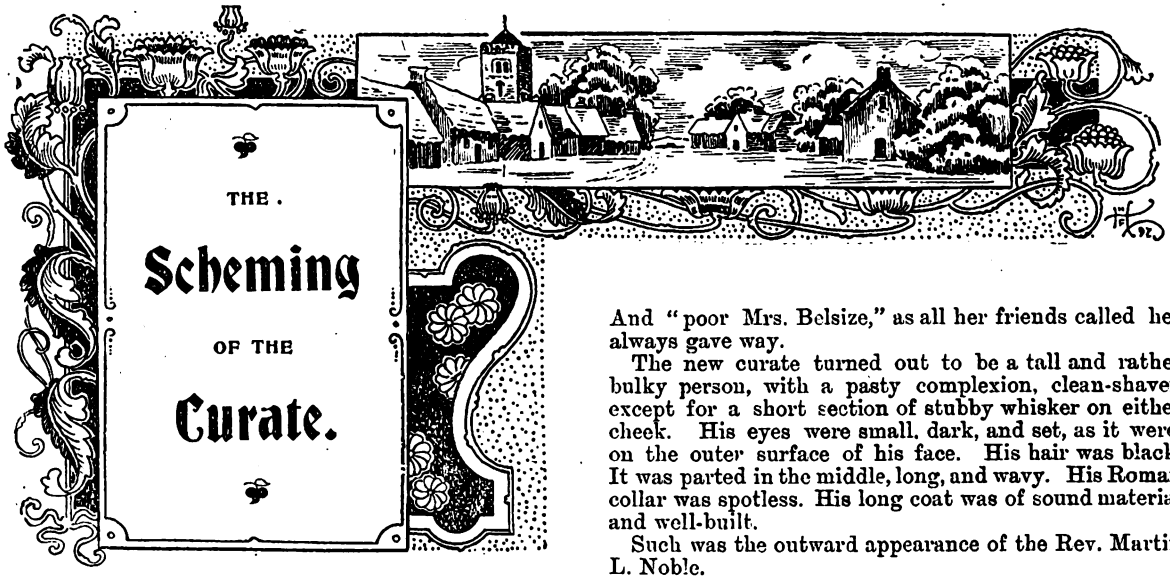

THE

Scheming

OF THE

Curate.

"I DO hope he will be a gentleman, my dear," said the rector's wife to her sister-in-law, with a look of anxiety.

"Whom do you mean, Jane?" asked Miss Belsize, in her peculiar bass tones.

"The new curate, of course. Have you forgotten? He is coming to dinner to-night."

"Oh! Anybody else coming?"

"No.'

"Then I should say the joint will be enough," returned Miss Belsize with a meditative air. "You won't want any side-dishes."

Mrs. Belsize bit her lip, but made no reply. She thought of asking sarcastically how many potatoes she ought to provide, and only refrained because she was at heart afraid of her sister-in-law. The Rev. Charles Belsize, rector of Bedminton, was himself afraid of his sister Elizabeth. So were a good many people whose f. t brought them into contact with that lady.

The rector's sister was just forty-two, and she was 'r ther plain"— that is to say, she had a large aggressive nose, a long upper lip, a sallow complexion, and a trifling hirsute appendage which was not an adornment. She lived permanently at the rectory; the reason being that a large part of her little fortune had been expended in helping to purchase the Bedminton living, on the tacit understanding that she would make the parsonage her home.

The Belsizes, it may be observed parenthetically, were of good family, being, in fact, second cousins of the Earl of Oxton, but poor. Miss Belsize was at heart what schoolboys call "a good sort"; but she was also a very managing person. She managed her sister-in-law so well that the poor little parsoness was sometimes tempted to wish that she had never been born, or that she had remained Jane Skinner to the end of her days.

The rector was a stout, comfortable man of moderate views, and a gentleman. He sympathised with his wife, but always counselled her to let Elizabeth have her own way.

"It pleases her, my dear; and really it doesn't matter," was his favourite formula for soothing his wife into compliance with some new demand on her patience. And "poor Mrs. Belsize," as all her friends called her always gave way.

The new curate turned out to be a tall and rather bulky person, with a pasty complexion, clean-shaven except for a short section of stubby whisker on either cheek. His eyes were small, dark, and set, as it were, on the outer surface of his face. His hair was black. It was parted in the middle, long, and wavy. His Roman collar was spotless. His long coat was of sound material and well-built.

Such was the outward appearance of the Rev. Martin L. Noble.

"You are a moderate churchman, I believe, Mr. Noble?" asked Miss Belsize during dinner.

The curate smiled and bowed assent.

"I am very glad to hear it," said the lady, in her deep, bell-like voice. "Do you approve of 'Hymns Ancient and Modern'?" she queried, after a pause.

There was absolutely nothing to guide the examinee, not the slightest indication whether he would be required to bless or to ban the well-known hymn-book.

"I should not like to say that I approve of every word and every line——" he began, with an air of bland impartiality.

"I should think not, indeed!" burst out Miss Belsize.

The sailing course seemed now plain enough.

"There are hymns in that book," continued the curate, with a solemn contraction of visage, "which——" Here the speaker caught a look of annoyance on the rector's face, and instead of saying, as he had intended, "which have a distinctly Romanist tendency," he substituted, with perfect self-possession, "which no collection could very well spare."

The rector laughed in his sleeve, and the lady was but partially satisfied. But the new curate soon made Miss Belsize understand that his views exactly coincided with her own, and thereupon he advanced rapidly in the lady's favour.

She lent Mr. Noble a copy of Miss Havergal's Poetical Works; and when the curate brought it back with many expressions of admiration for the poetry, and of gratitude to her who had placed such gems within his reach, Miss Belsize went so far as to take a pen and write on the fly-leaf, "Martin L. Noble, from his sincere friend and well-wisher, E. B."

Mr. Noble had already explained to the rector's sister that his second name was Luther, but that he hesitated about using it, partly because he was unwilling to challenge comparison with so great a man, partly because Luther (not having the good fortune to be born an Englishman) countenanced some doctrines which were hardly Scriptural.

It will be seen from these trifling circumstances that Miss Belsize and Mr. Noble were no way averse to each other's society; but whether the curate had the courage—the foolhardiness one might say,—to become a suitor for

that lady's hand was not certain. Public opinion in the parish was divided on the question.

The unmarried ladies between twenty-five and forty ridiculed the idea of the curate's having any serious intentions with regard to the rector's sister. But there were other parishioners who shook their heads and smiled in a knowing way when the subject was broached in their hearing.

Speculation on the point was stopped, however, by an event of such transcendent importance that it eclipsed all matters of ordinary interest. A report reached Bedminton that the Prime Minister had selected the Reverend Charles Belsize to be Bishop of St. Ninian's; and the report turned out to be true.

The fact was, that the unexpected demise of two intermediate heirs had made it highly probable that the Rector of Bedminton would before long become the twenty-ninth Earl of Alderney; and the Premier, no doubt, judged that it would conduce to the dignity and glory of the Church if a lay and spiritual peerage were united in the same person.

The newly-appointed bishop quickly resigned his living, and in the course of a few weeks took up his residence at the palace at St. Ninian's along with his wife and sister.

As for the duties at Bedminton, Mr. Noble continued to discharge them pending the appointment of a new rector. He naturally found it desirable to seek advice from his late rector pretty often on matters parochial; and as Bedminton was but a few miles distant from the cathedral city, Mr. Noble was nearly as often at the palace as he had formerly been at the rectory.

It often happened that the bishop was from home when the curate-in-charge came to seek counsel from him; and frequently, on these occasions, the multifarious duties which now devolved on Mrs. Belsize compelled her to leave it to her sister-in-law to entertain Mr. Noble. When this happened Mr. Noble seemed particularly well satisfied, and Miss Belsize also appeared to be well content.

One night, after this sort of thing had been going on for some time, Mrs. Belsize, with a very pleased look on her pretty face, hinted to her lord that perhaps it might be as well if he spoke a word or two to Mr. Noble.

"About what, my dear?" asked the bishop, sleepily.

"Well, about Elizabeth, you know," said the young matron, blushing a little as she spoke.

"Good gracious, Jane!" cried his lordship in much alarm, "you don't mean that I should ask the man what his intentions are with regard to my sister?"

"Certainly not," responded his wife with some dignity. "That would be absurd. Besides, it would be useless. His intentions, his hopes, I should rather say, are clear enough. Elizabeth and he understand each other perfectly. And, oh! Charles, I am so glad!"

The prelate was not so enthusiastic. He quite appreciated the advantage of getting his sister to manage somebody else, instead of him and his wife; but the Reverend Martin L. Noble was not exactly the kind of a man he would have chosen for a brother-in-law.

"Are you sure?" he asked dubiously.

"Oh, yes. Elizabeth told me to-day. 'Mr. Noble and I understand one another perfectly.' These were her very words."

"Then, if she has made up her mind, why need I meddle?"

"Because I think he seems to be in some doubt as to the Bedminton living. It is in Elizabeth's gift, you know; and naturally she would present Mr. Noble. But he can't marry till he gets a living; and as she is the patron I fancy he has a delicacy in broaching the subject to her."

"Delicacy? I shouldn't have thought—well, it is rather a delicate thing to ask a woman for her hand and a living at the same time; and, as you say, he can't take the one unless he gets the other. I think all the more of Noble for his hesitating to speak under these circumstances. But Elizabeth should be able to—to make things clear to him. If she has made up her mind—that's the main point, you know."

"Oh, yes; I'm sure she has, Charles."

"I will see her in the morning, then; and, if she wishes it, I'll say a word to Mr. Noble, from which he will be able to understand how the land lies. I suppose he really has been—eh?"

"No one who has ever seen them together could have any doubt on that point," said the bishop's wife decisively; and the matrimonial conference was at an end.

The bishop, after a little consideration, made up his mind that the curate of Bedminton was as good a match as his sister was likely to make, and being keenly alive to the inconvenience of her remaining permanently at the palace, he took an early opportunity of saying a word or two to Mr. Noble.

"My wife tells me," he said pleasantly, "that you and Miss Belsize have seen a good deal of each other lately—have been a good deal in each other's company; in fact—ahem."

The curate seemed confused, changed colour, ejaculated "Oh, my lord!" and murmured something indistinct.

"Well, that's all as it should be, I suppose. I don't know that I have any objection," said the prelate, hurrying on to the other branch of his subject. "But as to ways and means. Of course you know the living of Bedminton is in my sister's gift, as a sole surviving trustee of—of a settlement; and I see no reason why she shouldn't present you."

"Oh, my lord!" cried the Rev. Martin Noble, clasping his hands, "you take a load off my mind! I could not bring myself to ask Miss Belsize for the preferment, while——"

"Just so," said the good bishop with a smile. "It would have been awkward. I understand. But I think we may regard the matter as being settled now. And we shall be glad to see you at the palace any day next week—say Tuesday."

"Thank you a thousand times, my lord. There is, however, one thing that occurs to me, which it might be well to mention. The Bishop of Warminster, I happen to know, is going to marry his daughter to the Vicar of Pendlebury, a Mr. Marks—a very excellent pr—clergyman, but hardly of sufficient standing in the diocese. It happens that the rectory of Wichgate, in the Warminster diocese, is vacant at present; the right of presentation belongs to the Bishop. He would like to present his future son-in-law; but he hesitates to do so, for reasons which—which I need not go into. He fears that people might say that a bishop's son-in-law ——"

"I see—I see. Most ridiculous. All cant and nonsense. As if a patron could not be sure of his own flesh and blood—or, well, a man deemed worthy to be his son-in-law—than he could be of a stranger."

"Certainly, my lord; most certainly."

The Bishop was not quite sure, but he rather thought that there was a suspicion, a suggestion of ing, as if the

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curate had really said "certingly." It hurt him to think that his sister should marry a man to whom a suspicion of that nature could attach itself; but things had gone too far for him to recede.

"Still, people say unpleasant things, which get into the newspapers, and tend to undermine a clergyman's influence for good."

"Just so."

"I fear that there might be talk of that kind about Mr. Marks, and it might do harm. Now, it has occurred to me that if Miss Belsize were to be so very kind as to present Mr. Marks to Bedminton, and if at the same time your Lordship would be so good as to mention my name to the Bishop of Warminster in connection with the living of Wichgate——"

"I see—I see. Virtually an exchange of living between you and this Mr. Marks. By this means a good deal of ignorant, spiteful talk might be prevented—eh? I'll think it over; and if my sister approves of the plan, I'll ask my brother of Warminster's chaplain to come over and have a chat with me. I have no doubt that things can be arranged, Miss Belsize presents Mr. Marks to Bedminton; the Bishop of Warminster gives you Wichgate instead. Very good. Are the livings of the same value?"

"As nearly as possible the same, my lord. And I may say that Wichgate is in every sense as desirable a place of residence as Bedminton."

"Then no doubt I shall be able to arrange the matter satisfactorily," quoth the prelate, turning to leave the room.

The Bishop of St. Ninian's was, in fact, delighted with his future brother-in-law's suggestion. The exchange of livings would blunt the edge of any attack on the Bishop of Warminster; and for himself he felt that, much as he loved his sister, it would suit him better if on her marriage she were transferred to another diocese. It sometimes seemed to him that Miss Belsize was gradually undertaking the management of the See of St. Ninian's.

* * * * *

It was unfortunate that just at this juncture Mr. Noble had an attack of influenza, which confined him to the house; and when he recovered so far as to go out of doors, he proceeded at once, under the doctor's instructions, to the seaside.

But the wedding-day of the Rev. William Marks and the Bishop of Warminster's daughter had been already fixed, and it was necessary that, if the scheme of exchanging livings was to be carried out, it should be done at once.

Thus it happened that the formalities of presentation and institution had to take place before the new rector of Wichgate had an opportunity of seeing Miss Belsize. Indeed, it was only by accident that Mrs. Belsize heard that Mr. Noble had gone to Wichgate direct from Brighton, and "read himself in."

"He might have come here in the first place," said Miss Belsize, with some asperity in her tone; "but perhaps he was too weak to come so far, while there was probably some legal necessity for his entering into possession of his living at once."

"Perhaps so. But, I say, Elizabeth—"

"Why will you persist in using that odious phrase, 'I say'? Especially now, my dear, when, as the wife of a bishop, your example naturally attracts attention."

Mrs. Belsize's cheek flushed: she clenched her little fist under the table. Was she a child to be talked to in this way? As a mark of her displeasure, she kept silence till her sister-in-law begged her to resume her discourse.

"I was only going to suggest," she said, "that as we are engaged to dine and sleep at Warminster to-morrow night, we might drive over to the Wichgate, from Warminster in the morning, and see your new home."

Miss Belsize readily fell in with this proposal; and on the following day the two ladies proceeded to Wichgate Rectory from Warminster in a hired fly. During the drive Miss Belsize was engaged in composing dignified, yet cutting reproofs for her defaulting and ungrateful lover. The rectory, as Mrs. Belsize kindly pointed out, seemed all that was desirable; but the furniture of the drawing-room, into which the two ladies were shown, was not a soul-satisfying nature.

"Of course this must be entirely altered," Miss Belsize was saying to her sister-in-law as the door opened, and a woman with fat brown curls (palpably false) on her forehead, came in. She made a profound curtesy, and glanced inquiringly from one of her visitors to the other, while the heart of Miss Belsize sank within her as she asked herself, "Can this be his mother?"

"W'ich of you two ladies, may I ask, is Miss Belsize?" inquired the little old lady, clasping her mittened hands in front of her.

'This is she," said the Bishop's wife; upon which the old lady ran up to Elizabeth, caught her hands, carried them to her breast, and turned her eyes slowly to the ceiling, until her face was nearly horizontal.

"Our benefactress!" murmured she. "With all respects to our Bishop's lady" (another curtesy) "but our benefactress" (an arch affectionate glance towards Miss Belsize) "must 'ave the first place in our 'arts always."

"But I don't understand," said Miss Belsize, with her usual deliberate emphasis. "Who are you? Are you Mr. Noble's mother?"

"Oh, dear no, madam" (with a smile of surpassing archness). "I'm her mother."

"Whose?"

"The bride's mother, you know. We only came on Thursday—the marriage was only a week ago—so really, you know, this is a bit of the honeymoon. They had been engaged twelve months, and it might have been twelve years but for your goodness, madam. My son-in-law has explained everything to me. The appointment was nominally that of the Bishop, but really——" Another expressive glance, more arch even than the former one.

"Good heavens!" thought Miss Belsize, "what has that man been daring to say to those two women about me?"

Her indignation gave her strength; but it was hard—oh—it was hard—to have such ample causes of anger and not be able to show a trace of it. Miss Belsize was unable to sit still long. She got up, and muttering something by way of adieu, went to the fly which still waited for the two ladies, followed by her sister-in-law, and totally unmoved by the entreaties of Mrs. Herbert (so the small, stout, elderly person was named) to wait and receive the grateful thanks of the bride and bridegroom.

As Miss Belsize stepped into the fly she caught sight of a figure in black—the Rev. Martin Noble's—crowned by a very wide black felt hat. One of his arms was concealed behind the figure of a young woman, whose head reposed comfortably somewhere in the neighbourhood of the wide black felt. The two were coming on slowly towards the house, all unconscious of Mrs. Herbert, who was standing at an open window waving her arms at them to attract their attention.

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"Good gracious!" said Miss Belsize to herself, "they should see that old lunatic! If she should take it into her head to shout to them!"

She hurried into the fly, and astonished the somnolent flyman by the energy of her tone as she commanded him to drive back to Warminster.

During the drive she maintained a solemn silence; and never afterwards was she heard to allude to the Rector of Wichgate, or to any of his ways, words, or work.

But not long after the visit paid by the two ladies to Wichgate Rectory Mr. Noble received an invitation, which he well knew was a summons, from his new diocesan.

"Look here, Mr. Noble," said the Bishop of Warminster, "will you give me plain answers to one or two plain questions? Did I not appoint you to the living of Wichgate at the suggestion of Miss Belsize?"

"I believe so, my lord," said the Rector with a bow.

"And did she not recommend you to me because it was understood that you and she were to be married?"

"What, my lord? Do I hear aright? I? Married to Miss Belsize?" and the reverend gentleman's eyes wandered about the room, as if seeking a clue to the mystery.

"Come now, sir," said the Bishop sternly, "I am speaking as one man of the world to another. Was it not so arranged?"

"Never, my lord. I am ready to take my oath of it."

"Or understood?"

"Not in the least, so far as I was concerned. Why, my lord, during the conversation between the Bishop of St. Ninian's and myself there was not a syllable——"

"Perhaps not. But was there no love-making?"

"Love-making?" echoed the Rector with a smile. "Your Lordship cannot be personally acquainted with Miss Belsize."

"She seems to have thought so, at any rate," said the Bishop bluntly.

"It is possible, and it grieves me to the heart to think that it should be possible," said Mr. Noble, pausing for a moment as if to concentrate his intellect in an act of the purest justice. "I can only say, or rather hint, that some ladies, after they pass a certain age, are notoriously liable to mistake the most ordinary politeness for—I need say no more. Doubtless your Lordship understands."

"Yes; I think I do understand," said the bishop slowly, and with a glance so peculiar that for the first time in his life Mr. Noble felt abashed.

There, perforce, the matter ended. The Rector of Wichgate is a very popular man, and he is confident that the bishop of Warminster will soon forget the unpleasant circumstance which attended his first coming into the diocese.

It may be mentioned that not long ago Mr. Noble presented several volumes (the sweepings of his library) to the Wichgate Sunday school and Parochial Book Club. Among them was a beautifully bound copy of Miss Havergal's poems, the fly-leaf of which was missing. The rector is now a High Churchman; he has dropped the "Luther" altogether, even the initial.

Miss Belsize still resides at the episcopal palace of St. Ninian's, but it is understood in the diocese that she is to be united in the bond of holy matrimony to the Rev. Simeon Baldun one of his Lordship's chaplains, as soon as a suitable living falls vacant. It is likewise understood in the diocese that the marriage ceremony is to precede the rite of institution to the benefice.

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HE OBJECTED TO OPERAS.

THE town of L—— is one of the most quiet and old-fashioned of Scotch towns. Nevertheless, L—— has an opera house. The building was formerly the lecture-room, and was used for town meetings, but recently it was resolved to convert it into an opera house suitable for the performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore.*

Naturally there was a great deal of opposition to this on the part of the older inhabitants. The most energetic of the anti-opera house party was Mr. Brewster, a prosperous varnish dealer, and an elder of the Kirk. He said that no man could approve of an opera house. This failed to convince those who advocated the opera house scheme, and they openly said that Mr. Brewster was an old fogey.

The final result, however, was that the opera house party gained their end, and the old lecture-room was transformed into a very respectable imitation of a small theatre. A company had engaged to produce *H.M.S. Pinafore* at L——, and it was at one time feared that the opera house would not be ready for them. The seats were wooden chairs with perforated bottoms, and on the day before that advertised for the performance they were still unvarnished owing to an oversight on the part of the building committee.

It was obvious that no time was to be lost; the committee, therefore, went to Mr. Brewster, and explained that they wanted a quantity of best varnish without delay. Somewhat to their surprise, Mr. Brewster consented to sell the varnish, and even showed a good deal of energy in the matter. This injured him in the estimation of the opponents of the opera house, who said that they could not understand how so good a man could sell his principles as well as his varnish.

All the opera house people laughed derisively, some of them going so far as to say that the elder of the Kirk could always be counted upon not to permit his principles to interfere with his business, and that the only really earnest moralists were those who built opera houses and attended representations of *Pinafore.* The house was varnished, however, and on the next evening it was opened by the new *Pinafore* company. Every one of the seven hundred seats was occupied, and it must be admitted that among the audience were many of the leading citizens of the town and their wives and daughters.

The first act of the play was listened to with the most serious attention, and when the curtain fell, not a single person went out for a breath of fresh air. The manager was delighted, and remarked to the leading actor that he had never seen so intelligent an audience in the whole course of his life. The second act was received with the same quiet attention, and there was even a look of painful anxiety on the faces of several of the men in the audience.

Sir Joseph began to feel annoyed at their solemnity, and asked the manager if the people took him for an undertaker, and believed they were attending a funeral.

At the end of the act there was the same absence of the apparent want of fresh air amongst the young men that had been noticed after the first act. The play came to an end, and the curtain fell amid a silence as of the grave. The orchestra rose and departed, but the audience sat still. The manager came to the footlights and annouced that the play was over, and, as the announcement had no apparent effect, begged to be informed whether the opera house was a deaf and dumb asylum, or whether he himself had suddenly become stark mad.

It was then that Sandy Mactavish beckoned him to his side, and explained that the audience would gladly retire if any way could be devised of separating them from their seats. No fewer than eight gallons of turpentine were bought from Mr. Brewster that night, and used in detaching the ladies from the seats, to which the undried varnish had glued them. When the ladies had all disappeared, the male part of the audience, with many irreverent exclamations and cries of anguish, tore itself loose, and went home through the back streets.

The opera house has remained closed ever since the opening night, and it is the belief of L——that Mr Brewster, who mixed the varnish, and who was subsequently found in his shop at eleven o'clock at night, ready to sell turpentine in quantities to suit purchasers, deliberately brought about the catastrophe that broke up their *Pinafore* season.

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

S. N.—It is in Warwickshire and Staffordshire that a discordant singer is called a "Bromwich throstle." If a stranger, he possibly flatters himself on the appellation; but to say to a native that he "sings like a Bromwich throstle" is an insult, for the title, like that of "Jerusalem cuckoo," really signifies donkey.

Legion.—About 54,000 Frenchmen belong to the Legion of Honour; 32,000 of these are connected with the army. The rest are civilians.

M. P.—The House of Commons recognises no reports of its debates, and has always declared that to report them is a breach of its privileges. This is still the existing law, although these reports have been made without hindrance for more than one hundred years.

R. T. — Breeches among the Greeks were the garments of slavery.

Miles.—A Burman mile is about equal in length to two English miles. The word for "mile" in Burmese means "to sit," and a mile is the distance that a man goes before he considers it necessary to sit down.

Gilt.—From 14,000 to 16,000 persons are actively engaged in the jewellery trade of Birmingham, and the amount of capital embarked in it is larger than that of any other Birmingham industry. The annual consumption of gold is in value £750,000, and of silver £350,000.

O. P. T.—Some first-class glass eyes cost about £10 to manufacture.

Insomnia thinks that when a person has a trouble to fall asleep, he should put his head under his arm—"as birds put their heads under their wings."————It is a common error to suppose that birds sleep with the head beneath the wing. No bird ever sleeps so; the head is turned round and laid upon the back, where it is often concealed by feathers.

Motion.—There is a clock at Brussels which comes about as near being a perpetual-motion machine as can be invented, for the sun does the winding. A shaft exposed to the solar rays causes an up-draught of air which sets the fan in motion. The fan actuates mechanism which raises the weight of the clock until it reaches the top, and then puts a break on the fan till the weight has gone down a little, when the fan is again liberated and proceeds to act as before.

J. S.—£324,000 is the amount which Messrs. W. D. and H. O. Wills, Ltd., the tobacco manufacturers, have paid for duty during the month of March alone.

A. N.—It was once customary in this country for a person going abroad to "put out" a certain sum of money on condition of receiving good interest for it on his return home. If he never returned, the deposit was forfeited.

Algy.—The small town of Werda, Dahomey, is celebrated for its temple of serpents, a long building in which the priests keep upwards of 1,000 serpents of all sizes, which they feed with birds and frogs brought to them as offerings by the natives. These serpents, many of them of enormous size, may be seen hanging from the beams across the ceiling, with their heads hanging downward, and in all sorts of strange contortions. It often happens that some of these serpents make their way out of the temple into the town, and the priests have great difficulty in coaxing them back.

Will.— Thousands of people visit Shakespeare's birthplace annually, all nationalities being represented.

Safe.—There are about 400 banks in the United Kingdom.

W. P.—White and red wines owe their difference to the fact that while the former is permitted to ferment without the grape skins, these are allowed to remain in the case of the latter. The colour of the grapes makes no difference whatever to the colour of the wine which they produce, for the juice of all grapes is as nearly as possible colourless. For instance, the grape which yields champagne is almost black to outward appearance.

Tommy.—Desertions from the German army are very numerous. It is stated that nearly 40,000 men desert every year.

Liber. — So valuable were books in the Dark Ages, that donations of them are recorded as acts of signal generosity, deserving perpetual remembrance. The value of books may be seen by the fact that in 690 the King of Northumberland gave 800 acres of land for one book containing a history of the world. A Countess of Anjou gave 200 sheep and a large parcel of rich furs for a volume of homilies. In 1420 a Latin Bible was valued at £30, at a time when two arches of London Bridge were built for less money.

N. G.—Quite eight hundred British parishes have populations of less than one hundred souls.

A painstaking correspondent informs me that the average head of hair worn by a woman, if placed end to end, would measure fifty miles in length. He thinks it well for the ladies that their head adornment is cut up into short lengths.

F. S.—The average wholesale price realised for the fifty or sixty millions of oysters landed on our coasts during the year is about 7d. a dozen.

Palace.—The magnitude of the Escurial, the great Spanish palace, may be inferred from the computation of Francisco de les Santos that it would take four days to go through all the rooms and apartments, the length of the way being reckoned at twenty-three Spanish leagues, which is about 120 English miles. There are 14,000 doors and 11,000 windows in the edifice.

Dent.—Oh, no! Artificial teeth have been found in skulls in Etruscan tombs dating back to 600 B.C.

South.—Yes; on the summit of Ben Lomond you will see the smallest tree that grows in this country. It is known as the dwarf willow, and is, when mature, only about two inches in height.

Med.—Four millions of pills are taken by the inhabitants of the United Kingdom every week. In France the quantity is about one-half. Only about one million are taken by the people of Russia.

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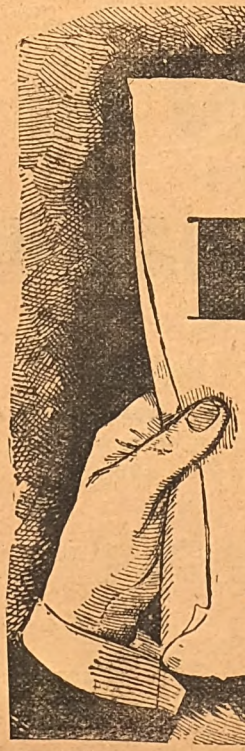

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 540. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 6TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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For High Stakes

CHAPTER 1.

A Scandalous Bargain.

One of the great Trans-Atlantic steamers was coming into port just at sunrise on an October morning. After a long storm, the day was breaking fair.

Early as was the hour, the passengers were all astir in anticipation of a speedy arrival.

Cabins, decks, and state-rooms were scenes of buoyant confusion, of packing, and dressing, and chattering, while from time to time there was a rush forward for a longed-for glimpse of the land ahead.

In the midst of all this joyous excitement one person sat unmindful and unmoved by it all. This was a woman, young, and, despite her toilet—she still wore the heavy wrap and unbecoming hood suited to the stormy passage—singularly attractive.

Stretched in her deck-chair, her languid head reclining against the back, her face, with its delicate curves and delicious colouring slightly upturned to the soft, blue atmosphere, she seemed isolated and indifferent about her animated surroundings.

The girl was Eglantine Villars.

The moments wore on. The shore, the principal buildings were already in sight, but still Miss Villars did not move. Her face remained the only one on board the steamer that was turned away from the appproaching shore.

Among the last of the lady passengers to appear upon the deck, where all were at length assembled, was a handsome woman of thirty-five or forty, dressed in admirable taste, in a tailor-made grey cloth suit, with well-fitting gloves and boots and a sparkle of diamonds here and there about her person.

"Mrs. Montagu is herself again!" exclaimed a tall, sandy-haired young man, as he caught sight of her, and striding towards the lady—his face beaming—he offered her his arm.

"Thanks," she said, with a winning smile; "I am independent of all mankind this morning."

"Ungrateful woman!" murmured Caxton Leigh, with an affectation of wounded feelings. "But how you needed me two days ago!"

Mrs. Montagu moved on, still smiling, returning a bow, or replying to a congratulation, the cynosure of all eyes, her gown the envy of every woman's heart.

"Where does she get such clothes?" queried Rose Singleton.

"I believe her gowns are born, not made," responded Hortense Rivington.

Stopping from time to time to exchange a few words with a group, Mrs. Montagu was evidently directing her course towards the chair where Eglantine Villars still sat unmoved.

It needed only a casual observation of her transit across the deck of the steamer to disclose what a popular woman she was. From Hortense Rivington, to whom she had revealed a style of dressing her hair which improved the contour of that young lady's face, to Geoffrey Barton, the elderly stockbroker, whose nightly partner she had been at whist, every passenger on board the steamer had a sense of being in some way indebted to Mrs. Montagu. She was one of those women whom the world pays on demand, accepts, as may be said, at full value. She was beautiful, intelligent, with fine manners and exquisite tastes. What more can be asked? Had she social position? She knew everybody. Had she family claims? Unquestionably, since she was perfectly indifferent whether her acquaintance was sought or not. Her means were apparently sufficient for her requirements. She was, in short, too desirable a person to omit from one's list, and she had, during the six days' passage, exchanged visiting cards with every desirable woman on board the steamer.

Miss Villars' face was the only one which made no response to Mrs. Montagu's salutation.

"We shall be in in an hour," said that lady, pausing, with an air of resolution, beside the young girl's chair.

"Yes," was the indifferent assent.

"Is your luggage ready for the Custom House officers, and your plans otherwise arranged?"

The question was put in a careless, matter-of-course way.

Miss Villars raised her head in surprise to confront her questioner. There was a flash of resentment in her beautiful eyes, a sweep of indignant colour across her face.

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"You are very kind to concern yourself about me," she said haughtily, looking the intruder full in the face.

"Possibly you judge my motives aright," said Mrs. Montagu, in the same steady tone.

"Really!" was the languid response. "I—I have not concerned myself to judge your motives at all, my dear Mrs. Montagu."

The flash of light and colour faded out of the lovely face the graceful head sank back into its previous position, and the firm curve of the lips would have indicated to a less sensitive person than Isabel Montagu that the conversation was at an end, so far as one party to it was concerned.

Mrs. Montagu only smiled faintly—a fine, transient way she had of smiling without distorting her features.

Someone had left a chair close by unoccupied, and, drawing it up to the young girl's side, Mrs. Montagu said quietly:

"You are in difficulty, Miss Villars, and I am the person to help you."

"Pardon me," said Eglantine coldly. "I daresay you mean well, but——"

She raised herself again to repel the unwelcome advance, and her scornful lips and flashing eyes concluded her sentence.

"Oh, yes; I will pardon you," said Mrs. Montagu calmly; "but, in return, you will listen to me."

She took no notice of the young girl's gesture of dissent.

"The time is short," she went on, "and before we are interrupted I will proceed without wasting any more words, to what I intend to say."

Miss Villars sat silent, through surprise, and gave her attention.

"I am a woman who knows well the world, Miss Villars," proceeded Mrs. Montagu. "I have made a study of your situation from what I know of your story, and have come to a decision which I am going to confide to you."

"You know my story?" repeated the girl.

"Certainly. I know that your father failed in business two years ago, and that with what he could save from the wreck, he sailed for New York, taking you, his only child, with him. You and he have lived well during these years. But a month ago he died leaving you alone in the world and almost penniless."

Mrs. Montagu paused, and her listener asked briefly:

"How did you know all this?"

"Your father and I met more than once, Miss Villars—in fashionable gambling houses," was the significant reply.

Eglantine Villars was drawn to her full height now. Her beautiful hands, resting upon the rug that lay across her knees, were opening and shutting nervously.

"And who are you?" she asked coldly of the woman before her.

"I am a woman who has played at odds with fortune, and won the game," was the reply, "and I am ready to help you to do the same."

Miss Villars shook her head.

"You are mistaken in me," she said. "I am not made of ambitious stuff. Life has proved a cruel disappointment, and I only ask to be let alone. I am not quite a pauper. I shall go to my relatives in a quiet Midland town, where my accomplishments may be in request, for I am a good musician, and know three modern languages. A small income will suffice ——"

Mrs. Montagu listened impatiently.

"How absurd!" she interrupted. "A beautiful girl of twenty, who might be a Society favourite, marry into one of the best families, and shine in the sphere for which nature has fitted her——"

Eglantine was about to speak, but Mrs. Montagu prevented her with a gesture.

"Your village would prove intolerable," she continued with increased energy, "you know that it would. How have you lived? Journeys, balls, receptions, art galleries have made up your existence. Fancy pottering about in a waterproof and thick boots to teach stupid girls to thump on cheap pianos!"

"Let me alone!" cried Eglantine, with a burst of temper. "What concern of yours is my life? Don't you suppose I have counted all the annoyances you foretell? Do you think I would accept them if I had any alternative?"

"I can provide an alternative."

Mrs. Montagu had brought the conversation to the point which she intended to reach, and she uttered the words composedly, and paused to let them take effect.

This effect was precisely what she had calculated it would be.

Eglantine Villars looked straight into her handsome face, which, however, told no tales, and asked abruptly:

"How?"

"I am ready to offer you a home, to introduce you into Society, to furnish you with money for dress—"

"You are generous, certainly."

"Not at all. You did not wait for me to name the conditions upon which I will do this."

"Conditions?"

"Of course. In return for my advances, you will discount your future fate."

"I do not understand you."

"I mean, simply, that, with any sort of management, you are sure to marry within a couple of years. You will marry, of course, for money, then you will pay me back for making this possible."

"How do you know that I shall marry for money?"

"I know that you *can* do so, and your acceptance of the bargain means that you *will* do so. That is all."

"You confuse me," said Eglantine piteously.

"I have tried to be clear," said Mrs. Montagu, with faint sarcasm. "Turn round," she added, "and look at the shore. What a busy, crowded scene. We are almost there. Will you accept my protection, share the cosy 'flat' in South Kensington which belongs to me, enter upon a round of congenial pleasures, resume your schoolgirl friendships, live in an atmosphere of admiration, or will you go to the dead-and-alive town you have in mind, and throw your youth away?"

Mrs. Montagu rose.

Eglantine buried her face in her hands. Mrs. Montagu turned slowly away. The sound of her light, retreating step aroused the girl suddenly. She rose from her chair, and extended her hands. Mrs. Montagu turned her head.

"Take me," said Miss Villars, in a mechanical tone. "I can't be left alone."

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Montague Plays Her Cards.

Up and down the rose-banked staircase surged the brilliant throng. Mrs. Rivington and her daughter were "at home." The hostess was in silver brocade, with rubies and diamonds for jewels. A superb woman

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in her trailing, glistening gown, she stood beside her tall, girlish daughter in her Nile-green costume, with a string of amber beads, and a bunch of yellow rosebuds for her only ornaments.

Hortense Rivington could not be called handsome, but she had youth and grace, high spirits, and the prospect of a fortune.

Of the two or three young men who hovered in the

By her side walked Miss Villars.

débutante's vicinity, availing themselves of occasional pauses in the arrivals of guests to chat with her, Caxton Leigh kept a little nearer, in a privileged way, to Miss Rivington's side than the rest.

He was a tall, blonde, handsome fellow, of an old and distinguished family, of which he was the last representative. With the family fortune he had inherited the family tastes.

He was a lover of beauty, a connoisseur in art, his habits extravagant, his society in demand, and it had been remarked prior to the evening of Miss Rivington's ball, that Caxton Leigh was just the fellow to marry an heiress.

His acquaintance with the Rivingtons had begun on the steamer, by which he was returning from a three months' run through the United States, and during the month or more which had intervened since their arrival at home he had paid court to the young *débutante* in a significant, noticeable way.

Hortense had just given him one of the yellow rosebuds from the loose cluster which she held in her hand, and he was engaged in fastening it in his coat, when a little stir in the crowd—that change of expression which comes over an assemblage of people as it does over a single face—attracted him.

Glancing towards the door, he saw Mrs. Montagu and Eglantine Villars enter the room together.

Mrs. Montagu was dressed in her usual rather severe taste—in black velvet, Princess shape, with a long, narrow train; the corsage was rather open, revealing her white throat and neck, and sleeveless, showing the upper portion of the beautiful arms above the long gloves. By her side walked Miss Villars.

The young lady was a stranger to most of those present, and even to such as remembered their sea-sick, unhappy travelling companion, her present appearance was a revelation. She was dressed in white satin—a short gown of thick, lustrous material. A pink coral comb in her fair hair, and a large pink gauze fan which she carried, gave a rosy tinge which made one think of the dawn.

"A young Aurora," lisped young Tom Singleton, just emerging from the ball-room built out beyond the drawing-room, and communicating by arches twined with roses, through which floated the strains of a waltz and visions of motion and colour.

Mrs. Montagu and Miss Villars made their greeting to their hostess with polite brevity, and moved on down the room.

Five minutes later, Mrs. Montagu had smiling assented to play a rubber of whist presently with her friend, Geoffrey Barton, and Miss Villars had her pretty satin programme marked with half-a-dozen engagements to dance.

The last of the names placed on this programme was that of Caxton Leigh. He had yielded his place by Hortense Rivington's side, and followed Mrs. Montagu and Eglantine down the room.

"I saw so little of you on board the steamer, and yet you seem like an old friend. How travelling together does reveal people to one another," he was saying.

"I was ill nearly all the passage. How stormy it was!"

"Horrible. Some days Mrs. Montagu was the only lady on deck."

"She has crossed several times, you know."

"Yes. She is a tip-top traveller, but I did not even know you were in her charge. And now you are living together."

"Yes, for the winter. You will come and see us—on Mondays?"

"I will, indeed. But here is Singleton—to claim you for the next waltz. No matter. When his pleasure is over I shall still have mine in reserve."

Miss Villars and her partner were floating down the ball-room, and Caxton Leigh stood leaning against the arch watching them, unconscious of the fact that Hortense Rivington's yellow rosebud had fallen from his coat, and lay at his feet on the floor.

Meantime, Mrs. Montagu, at a card-table in an adjoining room, had drawn off her long gloves, and was shuffling a pack of cards lightly through her pretty hands.

"You have an uncommonly charming girl to introduce this season, Mrs. Montagu," said Geoffrey Barton, from his seat opposite.

"Yes, there can be no doubt of Miss Villars' attractions, both personal and pecuniary," was the careless reply.

"Ah, she has money, then?" inquired Mr. Singleton, who sat at Mrs. Montagu's right.

"It would be out of the question for me to chaperone her if she had not," said Mrs. Montagu, absent-mindedly placing the pack of cards on the table to be cut.

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"I hope you'll not have to watch Miss Villars so closely as to prevent our having an occasional game together," said Geoffrey Barton.

"We shall be at home on Mondays, and glad to see you," the lady answered, proceeding with the deal.

"We must have some small stakes," said Geoffrey Barton, drawing a shilling from his pocket, "just to keep us awake."

"Mrs. Montagu, do you agree to that?" asked Mr. Singleton.

"I am obliged to do so when I play with Mr. Barton," was the careless answer. "If I do not he always forgets which suit is the trump."

A couple of hours later, when the whist party broke up, the pile of gold and silver upon the table amounted to five pounds. Mr. Barton gallantly handed his partner a banknote in exchange, and she slipped the folded paper inside the glove she had now resumed.

"Well, I, for one, never gambled before," said Mr. Singleton angrily, as he left the table.

"If you had played in the houses of the aristocracy as much as I have, you would not be able to make that statement," laughed Mrs. Montagu." Even Bishops play whist for small stakes. They do not call it gambling—except, perhaps, when they get angry because they have lost the rubber."

The gentlemen laughed, and Mr. Singleton was silenced.

CHAPTER III.

The Price of a Friendship.

Mrs. Montagu's "Monday's" at Cardinal Mansions were very pleasant occasions to some, at least to those who frequented her little salon. Her receptions were quite unpretending. She had but one drawing-room, the floor was covered with rugs, a line of water-colour sketches hung along the wall, there was a fire on the tiled hearth, a low tea-table stood in a corner.

Mrs. Montagu herself was to be found behind this tea-table. Miss Villars stood usually near the fire, resuming her seat when opportunity came, upon the small Chippendale sofa, beside which there was always a large china bowl full of flowers.

The room was generally rather crowded. There was apt to be a literary, or dramatic, or artistic "lion" present. Mrs. Montagu had a faculty for finding distinguished people, and making them think it was worth while to drop in at her receptions.

Young girls always came in abundance, because they were pretty sure of finding a good many young men—very nice ones like Caxton Leigh and Tom Singleton—and the matrons came, because some of them could never divest themselves of the notion that this charming Mrs. Montagu would require watching.

By six o'clock, however, the guests dispersed. It came to be remarked as the winter wore on, by those who were last to leave, that they always left Mr. Geoffrey Barton behind.

Was the rich stockbroker to fall a prey to the fascinating widow? It certainly looked so. Be it how it may, Mr. Barton stayed to dinner regularly every Monday.

After dinner on this day, Eglantine had what she called her "Recital Club" to meet in the drawing-room, and in the small adjoining room the card-table was set out; two or three men usually joined the whist party, and the young people in the drawing-room generally took their departure long before the last rubber was ended.

On Monday evening the "Recital Club" decided to see *Cymbeline* played at the Thalia, in lieu of proceeding with their customary programme.

Unconventionality was their watchword, so the gentlemen drew lots as to which lady they should escort, and Caxton Leigh drew the number that represented Miss Villars.

The slips had been placed in a little glass jar, and Leigh was the first to draw.

Young Singleton drew his sister, and Dick Dalrymple Hortense Rivington, these six being the members of the "Club." The award was announced by Leigh, whereupon Singleton—always hot and hasty of speech—sprang to his feet and exclaimed excitedly:

"There has been cheating in the draw!"

"Shame! shame!" said two or three voices.

"I say there has been cheating!" said Singleton, aloud. "I saw it plainly. Leigh arranged the slips, and took his pick."

"Let's try it over again," said Dalrymple. "I am satisfied, but I want everyone else to be, of course."

"The draw was perfectly fair, and I decline to try it over again," said Leigh haughtily. "At a proper time, I suppose, Singleton will explain himself to me. But this isn't a proper time."

"I have no explanation to make. Explanations are for others," said Singleton hotly. "I shall take my sister, and go home. I have suspected for some time that *cheating* went on in this establishment, but I have only just discovered that a man whom I called a friend is mixed up with it."

Rose Singleton attempted to stop her brother's excited words, but without avail. Finally, she caught his arm.

"Tom, you shall come with me this instant!" she cried.

Caxton Leigh's blood was up now. He placed himself before the Singletons, intercepting their progress towards the door.

"After you apologise to Miss Villars you may go, not before," he said fiercely.

"Has Miss Villars appointed you her defender?" sneered young Singleton.

"This is disgraceful," said Hortense Rivington, "for you two jealous men to quarrel so—and before us! Rose, stay with me. Mr. Dalrymple will take us to the theatre. Eglantine,"—turning towards Miss Villars, who stood like a statue, marble-pale, and wordless—"why don't you order Tom Singleton and Caxton Leigh to leave the house?"

"Miss Villars," said Leigh promptly, "I am at your service. Shall I go?"

"Let Mr. Singleton go, I beseech you," faltered Eglantine.

"I am bound to obey you," said Leigh, stepping back from the position he had taken.

Rose ran across the room.

"Dear Eglantine, I am awfully sorry for—Tom's temper. But, it is best for me to go with him, isn't it?"

"Certainly. Good-night."

"Look at the time—ten minutes to eight," said Miss Rivington as the Singletons took their unceremonious departure. "We shall miss the first scene. Let us start at once."

The sound of the loud and excited talking had reached the ears of Mrs. Montagu and Mr. Barton, who happened to occupy the adjoining room alone on this occasion.

Mrs. Montagu could not conceal her agitation, though she said playfully:

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"Beauty has its perils. Tom Singleton and Caxton Leigh are both head over ears in love with my pretty Eglantine. It sounds as though we might have to interfere to prevent them from coming to blows."

"I heard what sounded like 'cheating' in this establishment, Mrs. Montagu," said Mr. Barton. "Is there cheating in love, as well as at cards?"

For once, Mrs. Montagu's controlled features changed, in spite of herself.

"That is a strange question for you to ask, Mr. Barton," she said.

"Oh, no offence," said the keen-eyed old stockbroker, dove-tailing the pack of cards in his hands. "Of course, my dear madam, I know that you haven't won my money quite fairly, and I happen to know, also, that Lieutenant Gesler, who plays with us from time to time, and usually wins, is—your—as vulgar people say—your pal!"

"Mr. Barton, I am a woman whose hospitalities you have freely accepted, and whose acquaintance you have not been ashamed to acknowledge. I can only say that your insinuations cut me to the quick."

"I am sorry to hurt your feelings, Mrs. Montagu."

He rose from his seat, and came and stood before his hostess.

The drawing-room was by this time deserted, and silence reigned around them.

"I have enjoyed your society, and I—*was willing to pay for it.* I have understood your position for some time. You are an adventuress—a talented, handsome adventuress. You live by gambling," were Mr. Barton's explicit words. "I discovered your capacity for cheating before we left the steamer."

"And yet you continued to honour me with your friendship and society?"

"Yes, Mrs. Montagu. I have an interest in this house, which even my discoveries could not destroy."

He paused, and the blood rushed to Mrs. Montagu's face. *He was making love to her!* His words could have no other meaning.

With all her plots and schemes, Mrs. Montagu had never weighed the chances of marrying the stockbroker herself.

She was not, in truth, desirous of marrying at all, and yet, as she listened to Barton's words, a vision of ease and luxury rose before her, and captivated her imagination.

She said to herself that she was not an adventuress from choice, but from necessity. As Geoffrey Barton's wife, she could live as irreproachably as a Roman matron.

She put out her smooth, soft hand towards the grizzled man of business before her.

"So long as I retain your interest I am not quite hopeless."

"I suppose I am worth something as a friend," said Geoffrey Barton, in a straightforward fashion, "and I propose to remain your friend on one condition, Mrs. Monatgu."

"And that?" she asked, smiling up into his face.

"Is that you help me to marry your pretty ward."

"To marry Eglantine Villars!"

Mrs. Montagu withdrew her hand suddenly.

"The notion seems to appal you."

"To appal me? Oh, no. I—I—can hardly imagine that Eg antine could have a more brilliant offer."

"I am past fifty, Mrs. Montagu. I do not mince matters. I am an old man wooing a young beauty. All I can say is, that I am willing to pay for my luxuries. Now, tell me what you think of my chances."

Mrs. Montagu recovered herself.

"There are reasons," she said, "which make me think that Eglantine will not decline the honour hastily."

"Ah! that is good. Pave the way for my success, and you may count upon me as a friend. But—there must be no great delay. This little establishment must be broken up before those words of Tom Singleton's have a chance to get noised abroad. I shall not want any shadow upon my wife's past record, you understand. As soon as Miss Villars accepts my offer, I shall wish to remove her to the care of a different chaperon. You comprehend me, Mrs. Montagu? There is no occasion, I trust for offence."

Isabel Montagu passed her jewelled hand lightly across her forehead. Discovery, exposure, disgrace—these were what threatened her. She had never been so near downfall before.

One thing alone stood between her and the threatened danger. This one thing was Eglantine's acceptance of Geoffrey Barton's offer. Would Eglantine accept?

Mrs. Montagu, hardened as she was, felt a little shudder of repugnance at the idea. How, then, would it strike Eglantine herself? But there was no question of sentiment. Eglantine was bound to marry—to marry at her bidding, and thereby indemnify her for all this outlay which had floated them in good society for the past four months. Eglantine was her debtor. The bargain had been deliberately made, *and pay day had come.*

"You have my best wishes—you shall have my best aid," was all she could say.

"Miss Villars is, perhaps, under some obligations to you?" said Mr. Barton.

"She is."

"It will be my pleasure to discharge them, with interest, when she gives me permission."

"I will let her know your wishes this evening on her return," said Mrs. Montagu calmly.

"And I will call to-morrow for her decision. For the present I will say good-night. Miss Villars will soon be home."

Mr. Barton took his leave, and Mrs. Montagu composed herself to await Eglantine's return, and to arrange the way in which she could approach the subject of the stockbroker's proposal.

CHAPTER IV.

"PAY-DAY HAS COME."

It was past midnight, and the luxurious "lift" at Cardinal Mansions was no longer in operation. Eglantine and Caxton Leigh toiled slowly up the great, stone staircase, on their return from the theatre.

They did not mind the effort nor the delay. It gave them opportunity for sundry halts upon the landings when Leigh could say, "Do lean upon my arm," and "Let us sit down for a moment;" and Eglantine would answer, "It is so late for me to be out alone." And her companion would ask, "Are you alone when I am with you?" To which no possible response could be given but a contented smile, on which the griffins carved in the stone looked down with mocking grins, by the soft radiance of the electric light.

"This is the last landing," said Caxton finally. "We have got to it all too soon for me. This has been a delightful evening in spite of its stormy beginning. But—I have to settle with Singleton still, and, before I do so, I want to be able to say, 'Yes,' when he asks again if you have appointed me your defender?"

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"I am sure you would be, in case of need," murmured Eglantine.

"Here is your door. Do you think Mrs. Montagu is up still?"

"Yes, indeed. You must not think of coming in at this hour."

"Then, Eglantine, I will say my say at once."

He caught both her hands, and held her steadily where the pale, pure light fell upon her face.

"I love you—love is a weak word—I worship you, Eglantine Villars. You know it, of course. But the time has come when I must say it. Now, darling, good-night. I do not ask a word—a look, even, from you. To-morrow I shall come for your reply."

He touched the electric button as he spoke, and the door was instantly opened by Mrs. Montagu, who had heard their steps and voices.

"How late you are," she said, as the girl entered the room, "and how excited you look. It is not in good taste to stay out so late without a chaperone. The time has come, Eglantine, when we must be careful of appearances."

"I shall not do anything that can be criticised," said Eglantine with spirit.

"The 'things which can be criticised,' have already been done," replied Mrs. Montagu, rather sharply. "What was the fuss between Singleton and Leigh before you went out?"

Eglantine was standing before the mirror, unwinding the long white boa from about her throat. Her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks glowed.

"I will tell you all about it in the morning, I am so sleepy," and she yawned affectedly.

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Montagu, "but we can't crowd everything into to-morrow. Sit down please. I have to talk with you to-night."

"The 'fuss' was nothing of any consequence," said Eglantine, still impatient to be gone to her room. "Tom Singleton accused Caxton Leigh of cheating in drawing me."

"And he added something about other cheating that went on in this house. What did he mean?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied the girl.

"It is time you did then, Eglantine, for *I am found out!*"

"Found out?" said the younger woman.

"Yes. Singleton has discovered that my card-table," she made a gesture towards the adjoining room, "supports me."

Eglantine turned suddenly pale. Her father had gambled during the last years of his life, that she knew. But that Mrs. Montagu was likewise a gambler, had never entered her head.

"Don't look so ridiculously scared," said Mrs. Montagu. "Where did you suppose all the money came from? What I do is no worse than every stockbroker does, only Society doesn't tolerate the same proceeding in a woman's drawing-room that it justifies in the city."

"Then you—do—gamble?" asked Eglantine stupidly.

"Simpleton!" cried Mrs. Montagu, "have you no nerves? Sit up and calm yourself. We have got business before us. Yes, I gamble, if you want to hear the facts put into plain words, and as it's necessary for me to win, and as my associates can well afford to lose. why—I do win, that's all. I have never been suspected before. It is *your* friends that have found out my secret now. There is but one thing to do—that is, to drop out of my present position. I can give up this suite of rooms at twenty-four hours' notice. It is just the season for a

He caught both her hands.

trip to Biarritz. In short, I have made my plans to efface myself completely from London Society. There is but one thing necessary to my successful retreat."

She paused and looked at Eglantine.

"What is it that is necessary?" the girl asked mechanically.

"Money to pay our accumulated debts," was the reply.

"Debts?" still repeated Eglantine, parrot-like.

"Certainly. We owe everybody—who would trust us. Tailors, milliners, florists—"

"And have no money to pay them?"

"We haven't it in hand. And now, Eglantine, if you are alive and awake, listen to me. These debts are incurred for you. They are the advances I made, secured by your matrimonial chances. It was a fair bargain, of course, and *pay day has come.*"

Eglantine staggered into a chair on which she had been leaning.

"I understand," she said.

"And you are ready to fulfil your promise?"

"To fulfil my promise? Did I promise? I—did I say I understood? What I understand is that I am disgraced, ruined—that your protection was a trap! Oh, Heaven! why was I so weak, and you so wicked?"

She flung her arms upon the table before her, and burst into tears.

"You are weaker than I imagined," was Mrs. Montagu's contemptuous comment. "Save your

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dramatics and hysterics. You have need of all the composure you can muster. There is a way open out of all our difficulties, and that way you will have to walk in."

Her cool, scornful voice and unmoved features gave Eglantine a sort of self-control. She sat up and faced the woman who had imposed upon her youth and loneliness.

"What is the way?" she asked.

"Well, it is the way to the altar—with Geoffrey Barton."

Eglantine only stared.

"This evening Mr. Barton has made you an offer of marriage through me. He is very rich and indulgent. Your marriage with him will relieve us from all our embarrassments."

The girl heard the words as if in a dream.

She seemed still to be standing beside Caxton Leigh, still to feel his clasp upon her wrists, to hear his words. "I love you, I worship you. To-morrow you shall give me your answer."

She stood up, strong with the strength of passion.

"Marry Geoffrey Barton? I will never marry him. I am as good as engaged to Caxton Leigh."

"Indeed!" sneered Mrs. Montagu; "and you think Caxton Leigh will marry you when he knows upon what terms you came to live with me?—when he knows that your husband has got to pay your debts, why, his whole little fortune wouldn't release you from your obligations to me, Eglantine Villars."

"Do I owe so much?" stammered the confounded girl.

"When you accepted my offer you left the precise terms to me. I have as good as settled them with Mr. Barton. Nothing is required of you but your consent to become his bride."

A faint groan from Eglantine's pale lips.

"I cannot," she said, "I cannot. Show me a way of escape."

"I cannot show you what does not exist," said Mrs. Montagu. "Your lot is cast, and with a little self-control you can make it one to be envied. But whatever you make of it, you must accept it. Caxton Leigh, you will find, will repudiate your claim on him when the truth is known. He thinks you are wealthy, and that I am a woman of means. Wait till he finds out the truth. The little fortune you brought with you is swamped, of course, in the extravagances in which we have indulged. Practically you are penniless, and so am I. In this dilemma you have one resource. It is a marriage with the elderly stockbroker, who covets you, and who will pay well to possess you."

The clock on the mantel was striking three.

Mrs. Montagu rose.

"We have talked enough," she said. "The facts are clear. A few hours' reflection will cool your feelings. In the morning, when Mr. Barton comes——"

"I cannot see him so soon—not to-morrow—not till evening, at least. I am exhausted, tortured. Do not let him come to me before to-morrow evening," pleaded Eglantine.

Her plea did not deceive Mrs. Montagu.

She knew that the girl wanted time to communicate with Caxton Leigh. Well, the time should be given her. But, meanwhile, Caxton Leigh should know the truth; know that a great gulf yawned between him—proud, honourable and honest to the core—and this girl who had bartered away her claim to herself, and pledged her youth and beauty, in advance, to the highest bidder.

CHAPTER V.

The Cloud Bursts.

Four weeks had elapsed since the night of excitement just described.

It was a cold, cheerless March day. Mrs. Montagu sat in her drawing room in a stately costume of silver satin and Brussels lace, gloved, bonneted, evidently prepared for some great occasion.

From time to time she walked up and down the room in order to glance through an open door, where she could see reflected in a mirror the lovely form of Eglantine Villars, clad in bridal robes, sitting like a figure of wax under the hands of the "artist" who was arranging the bridal veil and wreath upon the broad, motionless head.

Upon the dressing-table before her stood an open jewel-case, containing a parure of diamonds, Geoffrey Barton's wedding present to his beautiful bride.

The coiffeur had finished his work.

"Will mam'selle put on her jewels herself?" he asked.

Eglantine motioned him away. A quiver of fear went over her pale, impassive face as she glanced at the sparkling stones.

As the hairdresser left, Mrs. Montagu entered the room, where Eglantine sat. She looked faded and haggard, in spite of her fine clothes. Evidently she, too, had gone through some sort of emotional crisis, which had shaken her firm nerves, and sapped her bloom.

"It is a quarter to twelve. We must start for the church in ten minutes," she said.

"I am ready," replied the bride-elect, in a strange tone.

"Eglantine!" Mrs. Montagu stood before the young girl,

She flung her arms upon the table before her, and burst into tears.

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Eglantine had looked for one moment with beating heart and tender eyes into her lover's face.

and her face showed deep agitation, "I want you, at this last minute, to say that you do not feel hard towards me; that you feel I have acted as seemed to me for the best; that you will not blame and hate me hereafter, for Eglantine, my child, I love you;" and tears, genuine tears, stood in the cold, brilliant eyes.

"I have nothing to say, no one to blame but myself, Mrs. Montagu. I was alone, afraid, on board the steamer. Life looked irksome and hopeless. Your offer came. If I did not understand its full import, that was my own fault. If I did not realise what it might mean to have pawned my life for a few weeks' amusement, —why, I must pay the penalty of ignorance."

"It will not be so bad as you fancy, Eglantine, when once this wedding is over. Plenty of girls of high principles and pure tastes would have married Mr. Barton if he had given them the chance. Thank you dear, for not blaming and hating me. I have not loved many people, and it would have hurt me to feel that I had been the cause of *your* suffering."

"I have no reproaches to utter. Within an hour I shall have fulfilled my part of the bargain. Your debts are paid. You are able to get away from this scene of disgrace, and I—in an hour—*I shall belong to myself.*"

The sort of exultation which crept into the girl's voice as she uttered the last words startled Mrs. Montagu. She saw also that Eglantine made a furtive, involuntary movement of her hand towards her breast, as though to assure herself of the safety of something concealed there.

"I have a confession to make, Eglantine, in these last moments we shall have together. You have been just so far. Now, my child, I implore you to be generous."

"Go on," said Eglantine, "the time is exceedingly short."

Again Mrs. Montagu started at her tone.

"If I feared ever so slightly for your perfect honour as Geoffrey Barton's wife, I should not tell you what I am about to tell. But I know you, Eglantine; you would die before you would deviate from your duty."

"Yes, I would die," she said absently.

"So—I will tell you that—Caxton Leigh's neglect — desertion, call it what you will—was due to me."

Eglantine started violently. The warm blood swept over her warm face.

"Before I slept that night, after your return from the theatre I wrote to Caxton Leigh, and put him in possession of all the facts, and in case his own pride and sense of propriety did not lead him to give you up on becoming acquainted with your true situation, *I forbade him to come to my house!*"

"And he obeyed you?"

Eglantine sat upright. The figure of wax seemed turning into a living woman.

"No. He disobeyed me. He made unparalleled efforts to see you—to communicate with you. But the hall-porter was paid to prevent his entrance into my apartments under any circumstances whatever. The letters, too, have passed through my hands, and all his letters were destroyed."

"Why do you tell me this?" said Eglantine, with a shudder.

"To free my own conscience, child; for never in my life before have I wronged a woman—unless it were myself; and, also, that you may feel, in the future, that Leigh believes you gave him up voluntarily. That places

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you on a vantage ground in meeting him in Society hereafter, as you must and will."

A bitter smile crossed Eglantine Villars' fair face.

"I shall never meet Caxton Leigh in this world again," she said.

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Montagu excitedly.

Again Eglantine's hand crept towards her bosom.

"In an hour," she repeated, "I shall belong to myself. I shall have fulfilled my contract, and paid my debts. Mr. Barton will have the right to bury me, and no other rights whatever."

"Eglantine!"

Mrs. Montagu uttered the word in a shriek, which mingled with a confusion of voices outside the entrance-door.

With the confusion, the door opened, and two men burst precipitately into the apartment.

"Madam," cried the voice of the house-porter, "I have done my best to prevent Mr. Leigh from entering, according to my orders. I am obliged to announce that the carriage is waiting, and that it is on the point of striking twelve."

Eglantine sprang to her feet.

Tall and fair, in her bridal robes, she confronted Caxton Leigh, who had pushed on into the dressing-room in defiance of orders.

"Eglantine," he said coldly, "I have sworn that this wedding should never take place until I had heard from your own lips that you married of your own will. For your sake I preferred to make the 'scene' here rather than at the church. All I ask is your word that you have not been driven to this through a sense of obligation to Mrs. Montagu."

Eglantine had looked for one moment with beating heart and tender eyes into her lover's face. Her lips were parting.

Suddenly an ashen pallor spread over her lips and brow. She threw her arms forward and slipped fainting to the floor.

A wild scream burst from Mrs. Montagu's lips. All her self-control had vanished.

"Help," she cried. "A physician—quick! Miss Villars has taken poison!"

* * * * *

It was one o'clock. The verger was closing the church, and explaining that Mr. Barton's wedding was postponed, owing to the illness of the bride.

In Mrs. Montagu's drawing-room, Eglantine was slowly recovering from a succession of swoons.

A physician stood with his finger on her pulse, and a small unopened phial, labelled "poison," which had fallen from the bosom of her dress, stood on the dressing-table besides the diamond ornaments as they lay in their velvet case.

Silent and glowering, Caxton Leigh leant against the mantlepiece.

"Eglantine Villars is mine," he had said, in defiance to Geoffrey Barton, who arrived upon the scene to learn the meaning of the delay after his awkward "wait" at the church. "She is mine, and nothing but death shall take her from me."

Mrs. Montagu was gathering up Mr. Barton's gifts, the diamonds, bangles, brooches, which he had lavished upon his promised bride. Lastly, she unlocked a leather bag and a purse from a secret drawer.

"Mr. Barton," she said, "I have been a little false to all. I have money in reserve. I wish to reimburse you for what you have expended in anticipation of marrying Eglantine. If you feel humiliated, so do I. I never attempted to speculate with human hearts before, and I have had enough of it. Take every penny I possess. I can work at something—for my daily bread. I put my past aside from this moment, and begin a new career."

* * * * *

Six months later, one summer day, Miss Villars and Mr. Leigh were quietly married in a village church from the home of Eglantine's aged grandmother, to which she had gone after parting with Mrs. Montagu. And late that same season, from their seats in the dress circle of the New Opera House, the young couple saw Mrs. Montagu, that was, and Mr. Barton enter a private box.

"The rumour was true, then. They are actually married," whispered Caxton to his young wife.

"Yes," said Eglantine, with a little shiver. "See—she has on those very diamonds!"

And she and her husband gave one grateful glance into each other's eyes, and then, calm and smiling, they nodded in recognition to Mr. and Mrs. Barton.

ALICE GRATTON.

An old lady of our acquaintance is so susceptible to cold that she won't even use moist sugar.

At the old curiosity shop. "Have you any old Roman weapons?"

Dealer: "We have none in just now; they are being rusted."

A man may sneer at a woman all he will because she can't sharpen a lead pencil, but she is able to smile at him when he stands holding an unoccupied button in his hand, and wondering if it will hurt less to pull the needle out of his thumb the same way as it went in, or push it on through.

Not long since, a family moved into a village in Kent. After a week or so a friend of the family called on them and asked them how they liked the locality.

"Pretty well."

"Have you called on any of the neighbours yet?"

"No; but I'm going to if there's any more of my coals missing."

The most practical lover has been discovered at Bristol. In one of his letters to his sweetheart he wrote: "I wish, my darling, that you would not write me such long letters. If you were to bring an action for breach of promise against me, the lawyers would copy the correspondence between us and charge fourpence for every folio of seventy-two words. The shorter the letters the more we save from the lawyer." And he was not a lawyer.

Every man to his trade. Yes, and every man thinks of nothing but his trade, and views everything only in its relation to his trade. Have you ever heard of the Irish tailor who went on a visit to Niagara Falls with a friend, and who gazed admiringly at the vast cataract until he was asked:

"Well, Pat, what do you think of it?"

It was some minutes before the little tailor could answer. He looked again and again at the torrent of waters, his mouth open, and his face aglow with enthusiasm. At last he burst out:

"Begorra! begorra! Phwat a lovely place to sponge a coat!"

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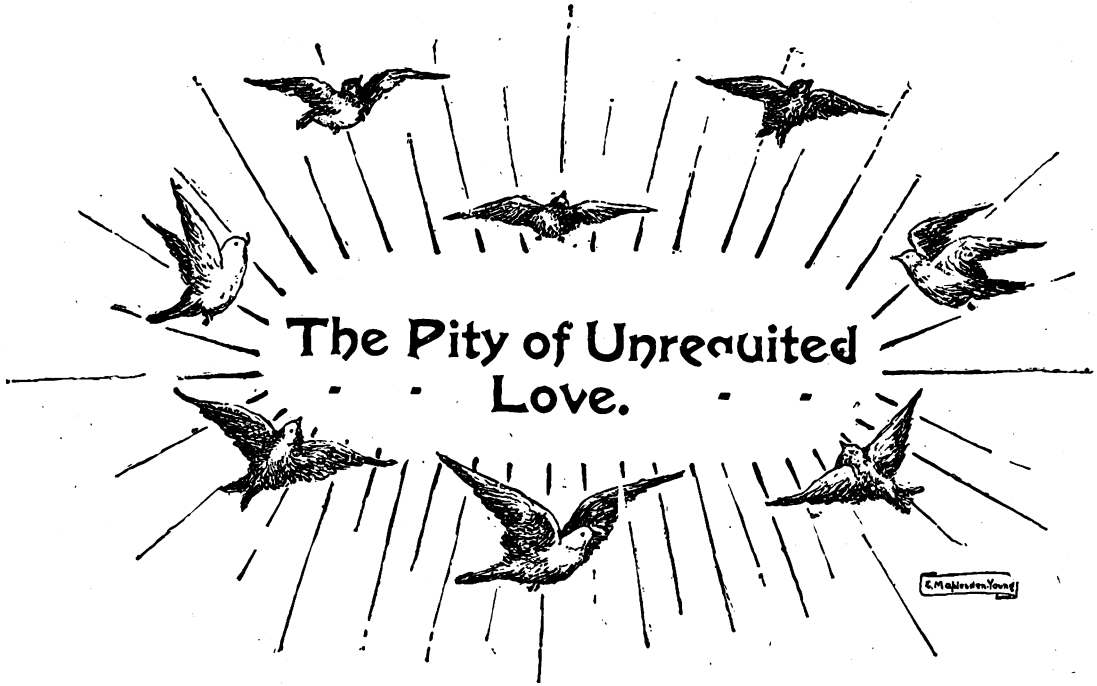

JOHN WATTERSON sat on the edge of his bed in his little bedroom, thinking. The lower drawer of the bureau in front of him within two feet of the bed was open, and in it two or three shirts lay in great disorder, as though tumbled by an impatient hand.

"They're all pretty bad—frayed and worn," said John to himself. "It's a question, though, whether to wear one of them or buy a new one and go without a decent dinner. Let's look again."

He took the shirts out, one after another, examined the bosom of each critically, and threw them in turn on the bed. Then he opened his purse and took out some money.

"Fifteen bob, and it's only the middle of the week," he sighed. "I shall have to buy the new shirt and eat a shilling meal."

He threw the shirts into the drawer.

"If I hadn't sent those flowers this afternoon—" It came over him suddenly how absurd it was for him to buy roses like those. But he remembered the fine sense of luxury he had experienced when buying them—only it was a bit humiliating to have to ask the price beforehand. But they were for her, and he would go without his dinner any time to be able to send her flowers. Still, it was absurd. What a bitter chance of fate it was that had thrown him into well-bred society, where people dressed well and dined well habitually—where he belonged, he felt, by every right, but the possession of filthy lucre. He said "filthy lucre" aloud, and took a certain pleasure in the phrase. Better for him to have lived quietly and known only the people he met every day at his work—and never seen her.

He put on his hat and coat and went downstairs. As he was opening the front door, his landlady entered the hall from the front parlour, and presented him with the bill for his lodging.

"Last week's, Mr. Watterson, you know——"

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Higgins. This Saturday I will settle for last week and this week together. I overlooked it last Saturday, and I haven't the money with me just now. But this week, Saturday——"

"Oh, all right. I thought I'd remind you——"

Watterson had closed the door and was out in the street.

A few minutes later he was sitting in a small restaurant. He could not help noting the meanness of the place, the smoky atmosphere, the cheap pine chairs with cane seats, the thin table linen, and comparing them with the appurtenances of the dinners he had eaten in private houses.

He found a certain pleasure in doing so.

There was a piquant contrast in dining excellently three days a week, and wretchedly the other four.

"Here I am now at half-past six eating in this disgusting place"—he noticed that the man who was sitting opposite him at the table had his napkin tucked under his chin and was eating with his knife—"in two hours I shall be sitting in a beautiful drawing-room, where every object speaks of refinement and luxury, talking with——"

It seemed hideous to think of her in his present surroundings. She did not know he dined, had to dine sometimes, in such places. Would she not be disgusted with him if she knew? The thought took away his appetite. He finished the insipid entree and the sickish pudding as soon as possible, lighted a cigarette to take the taste out of his mouth and hurried out. On his way back to his room he stopped at a shop and bought a shirt.

Sitting on the edge of his bed, he began to argue with himself whether he should go to see her or not. He knew all the time that he would go. He realized that it was dangerous for him to go, that his eyes constantly betrayed his secret—which he knew she knew. Could

he trust his lips not to betray it? Three words might put an end to everything. It was a terrible risk.

He had decided long ago not to tell her, not until he had the right to say more than three words. But suppose—yes, suppose she should care a little—perhaps a great deal— It was possible. He recalled two or three glances, two or three words, soft-spoken at a dance, which were burnt into his memory. The old thrill of them returned. But suppose she should not—what then? Ah, yes, what then? Anyway, he would go to see her that night.

He put on his dress clothes and went out. Half an hour later he climbed the steps of a big house, rang the bell and was admitted.

* * * * *

It was cold and late when he stood again on the steps. The street was deserted. Someone with creaking shoes was walking away in the darkness. Watterson buttoned his coat tightly round him and walked slowly down the steps. Which way should he go? It didn't matter much—he would walk to the street where the trams were.

As he walked along the deserted cross street a perfect calmness came over him.

After all, he was himself, living and breathing, seeing and feeling. It surprised him somewhat that it should be so, but it made his mere physical senses strangely acute.

He noticed how hard the pavement was, how rough the kerb, and he realised a certain pleasure in these keen sensations.

But at the same time it seemed to him that part of himself was absent or asleep—that part of him that really noticed and felt—and that it would come back or wake up to acute sensation—he could not forsee exactly when.

"It can never be."

The words rang suddenly in his ears and stunned him. The street became hazy and indistinct, and at the same time the part of him that really felt seemed to come back or awake.

"It can never be." That part seemed to be repeating like an echo, while he himself stood gazing at the street and seeing nothing.

"I will be calm," he said to himself. "I will walk back and think of something else."

He reached his room in a passive state of mind. "I am not sleepy," he thought, as he laid away his hat and coat.

"I will sit down and read awhile and then go quietly to sleep."

He took off his dress coat, put on an old one, and sat down with a book.

"I am perfectly calm," he said to himself, after finishing two or three pages. "I understand perfectly all I am reading."

He had read half a page further when a snatch of a tune somehow got caught in his head, and kept repeating itself mournfully over and over again.

He struggled to read on.

Always that snatch of a tune. Why? He had never heard it under any circumstances to make him remember it.

And yet there was a certain fitness about it to the present case. He felt that, and he hated the tune for it.

He threw down the book.

"I will go to bed—and to sleep," he said.

In the darkness his thoughts became terribly vivid, almost tangible. And always that snatch of a tune kept repeating itself like a murmur of the orchestra in a theatre when a melodramatic situation occurs.

To-day had been marked different from all other days. Would to-morrow be like the others?

He wondered what it would be like?

"I shall get up as usual and breakfast. Yes I will have some coffee and boiled eggs and some nice French rolls. That will not be so different though. I have eaten that breakfast before. But yes, it will be different—because of to-day."

After breakfast he should go to the office, see the same faces, do the same work, but it would all be different—because of to-day.

"It can never be."

But could it never be? Possibly it could be, years hence. She would marry some brute of a husband who would make her unhappy. Then, after years, she would be free—somehow.

He would be famous, rich, very rich, perhaps, then. She would be poor. They would meet and then it might be. She would be willing then.

But she had said it never could be, and of course it couldn't be then. He should be too reconciled to its not being.

But then it was not because he wasn't rich or famous, it was because she didn't——

He felt something hot and moist on his cheeks. Why, he was crying. He didn't mean to let himself do that. He was glad it was dark. He felt ashamed. At the same time he was angry—angry that anyone should have the power to make him cry. He almost hated her for a moment.

Suddenly, while he was in this mood, the thought of pistols came into his mind. He pictured out what he would do. He would go and shoot himself on the doorstep, her doorstep, late at night—no, early in the morning. He saw himself lying there, covered with blood. Somebody opens the door—screams. He is recognised—bah! what nonsense! He wouldn't do anything like that. He would go on living just the same as he had been living.

Again he saw her married to someone who made her unhappy; then free. This time, though, he felt no resentment. He was saying something to her in low tones—the words sounded in his ears as he lay there in his bed, but he could not make out just what they were, and she was looking up with that look:

"It can never be."

Again the words rang in his ears.

"It is all at an end," he said, burying his face in his pillow. "But I love her—I love her—I love her!"

W. S. Evesham.

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A LOVE TRAGEDY.

A Story of Old Mexico.

THE little town of San Carlos, lying in the heart of that vast wilderness of Old Mexico—a tiny patch of green on the face of the sun-scorched earth—seems insignificant to a degree.

Its few fields, bravely struggling against the heat and drought, are but sparsely watered by a little creek which flows from a ravine close by, and which seems to disappear into a thirsty earth a few hundred yards farther on.

San Carlos itself is composed merely of a few houses clustered together round a square little plaza, and the remnants of what had once been a tiny chapel, built hundreds of years before by the old Spanish fathers.

Yet, primitive as was the little town, here Juanita had lived all the happy eighteen years of her life, and here she was contented to stay until she should be laid beside her sleeping grandfathers and great-grandfathers in the little graveyard of the chapel.

She knew nothing of the great world beyond—she never even thought of seeing it. But there was another reason. Her father, old Don Jose, had promised her to the son of his oldest and dearest friend, who had fought with him years before in the war with the hated Americans, and who had been wounded in the battle of Cerro Gordo before the famous old City of Mexico itself.

Now, secretly, this was just what the young people had desired. Pedro and Juanita had grown up together from childhood. They had been constant companions, and were they not the handsomest couple in the whole broad valley? Had not Juanita all her father's lands as her dowry, which, united to those which Pedro owned, would make them the largest landowners in the village?

But now Juanita was sorely troubled.

Everything had gone along smoothly as ever until one day something had happened which bid fair to upset all their plans for the future.

On a certain bright morning, there had ridden up to the door of her father's hut one of a band of men who were prospecting in the mountains that lay over to the west. He was a fine-looking young fellow, and for a man who had been prospecting for two years under the fierce sun of old Mexico he was remarkably fair, and then his blue eyes had a frank expression in them which was far different from the over-suspicious glance which characterised the men of that quaint country.

He wore the usual dress of men of his occupation, loose blue flannel shirt and corduroy trousers tucked in at the top of his heavy boots, a red handkerchief knotted carelessly round his neck, and huge Mexican spurs on his heels.

Juanita had been standing in the little opening on the opposite side of the house, and had not seen him until he was almost beside her, so that it appeared to her as if he must have suddenly sprung from Mother Earth.

Harding had seen her about the same instant she had seen him, and, as he doffed his wide sombrero and asked in imperfect Spanish to see the don, unconsciously his pulse quickened.

Juanita was really a very beautiful Mexican girl, by far the most beautiful creature he had seen during the whole course of his stay in that dismally arid country, and the expression on the girl's face flattered him not a little. Still he had almost forgotten her when he had finished bargaining with her father for provisions for himself and his men, which he did at last succeed in getting on payment of a fabulous sum. When he turned and saw her standing where he had left her, he started and would have spoken had he not felt the piercing little black eyes of Don José fastened upon him.

As it was, the old man detected the start and ordered his daughter hastily into the house.

Ever since that time Juanita's thoughts had been in dire conflict, and late that night when all was quiet in the village she had crept noiselessly into the little chapel, and, kneeling before the time-worn image of the Madonna, had prayed, with tears streaming down her cheeks, that she would direct her and help her to forget.

But far up among the hills on the great range that overlooks San Carlos the prospector was standing alone, whistling softly to himself and gazing down into the wide plain at his feet. Some little distance behind him his companions lay sleeping, and on a flat rock, which answered for a table, someone had overturned the coffee pot and a dark, oozy stream was slowly running down the side.

One of the men moved a little in his sleep. Harding started and looked round at him. Then as the moon rose slowly above the peaks behind him he turned, knocked the ashes from his pipe, wrapped himself up in his blankets, and was soon sleeping soundly.

Nearly a week passed, and the feeling of restlessness which for a time had possessed Juanita had nearly been forgotten, when again Harding rode into San Carlos.

Poor little Juanita! All her attempts to forget him had been in vain then, for as she saw him come into the plaza her heart gave a great bound for joy, and she flushed under her olive skin.

As luck would have it, Don José had gone over to see a friend, and the two fell into conversation. She was shy at first, but the evident ease of her companion finally set her at rest, and when the old don did return they parted the best of friends, and with an understanding that they were to meet again down by the old well hidden in the little ravine outside the town.

After an hour's talk with her father Harding again left the house and, swinging himself into the saddle, rode carelessly away.

A mile or so from the town he made a slight change in the direction he was taking, and so little by little he approached the ravine.

Just as the sun went down Harding reached the well, and, after turning his pony to nibble the juicy blades of grass which grew around it, threw himself down to wait.

He had been there perhaps two or three hours when the bushes were parted gently and Juanita came towards him.

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She had slipped away, she said, while her father and Pedro sat smoking, and had come as she had promised, but she must hurry, for the time was short and her absence would be noticed.

Little by little between questions and promisings, she told him all her brief life history, of Pedro, of her father's wishes, and finally of her own new love for him, and when at last she could say no more she stood looking up at him, her eyes full of the love she had just confessed, until he took her in his arms and kissed her.

At that instant they were startled by a sound behind them. Don José, his face pale with fury, stood scowling at them.

Chokingly, the old man ordered the girl away, and when she was gone he turned to Harding.

"Maledictions upon you," he said, "you shall pay for this!" And disappeared as quickly as he had come.

There was no mistaking that, and the young fellow knew that if he stayed where he was his life would not be worth the waiting. His first fear was for Juanita. Loosening his revolvers in his belt, he mounted his pony and rode slowly towards San Carlos.

Some moments had passed in this way, and he had almost reached the mouth of the ravine, when he saw a figure coming swiftly towards him. An instant later he recognised Juanita. The poor child was almost exhausted from running.

"Go! go!" she sobbed; "they are going to follow you. Don José and Pedro, they will kill you if you stay! Ah, no, not now," she cried, as Harding held out his arms to her, "they will find me here with you and then—" and then, as the impulse seized her, she flung herself into his arms and sobbed as if her heart would break.

She had not been a moment too soon, for even as he spoke the sound of galloping hoofs reached them, as, riding furiously, their two pursuers dashed into the ravine.

With one arm supporting the trembling girl, Harding coolly unslipped his revolver and waited. The Mexicans were within thirty yards before they saw him, and then as they opened fire with their uncertain aim, he slowly raised his own weapon and pressed the trigger.

With a bitter imprecation on his lips one of the men pitched forward from the saddle and fell to the ground. One more shot came from the remaining man before the revolver spoke again, and Harding heard a smothered cry at his side as the riderless horse plunged past him and vanished up the ravine. Then he put up his revolver and turned again to Juanita.

She was strangely quiet as she gazed up into his face and smiled. A quickly-spreading stain over her fair young breast told him the reason at a glance. That last bullet of Don José's had found a mark, and as the shouts of alarm reached them from the village, whither the horse had gone, the light faded slowly from Juanita's eyes and they closed for ever.

For some moments Harding did not move, then he laid her gently down beneath a lonely little willow, kissed once the fair bloodless lips, and mounting his pony rode out of the ravine past the dead bodies of the two Mexicans, and with his head on his breast turned his horse towards the distant mountains.

H. A. Webster.

THE CELESTIAL AND THE CUR.

Locality—A valley in the interior of Queensland, described in the land agent's prospectus as the "loveliest of earth's favoured spots, where mere existence is perpetual delight," but presenting to the unappreciative eye the appearance of a very thinly-populated, treeless and grassless region.

A farmhouse stands some distance back from the public road. The chief advantages of its situation seem to be exclusiveness and open air. A disorderly fence surrounds a front garden, in which Nature blooms unrestrained in thistle and weed.

Enter through the gate, a rotund Chinaman with a very long pigtail. A small dog follows, perforce of a string attached to his collar. The dog, as he approaches the house, wails dolorously and tugs at the cord.

A middle-aged female person rushes out of the front door, grasps the dog, and enfolds him in ecstatic embrace.

She cries out:

"And you are here again, are you? My jewel, my blessed one!"

Hi Chang (serenely smiling): "Yes, me come."

Response (in excited, slightly Hibernian tones): "You think it's you that I'm a-talking to. You, indeed; and you an ignorant heathen. What is it you're meaning by keeping the dog, knowing all the country was being searched for him? Maybe it's starved, he is. Waggy, my own poor dog!"

Waggy wails affirmatively.

Hi Chang (tranquilly): "Me dlive him way, no go; me bling him you this time, next time him come he good-by you." Horribly significant wink of left eye.

Female party (frantically wrought up): "You are not daring to mean you'll kill him?"

Pagan (oracularly): "Velly bad dog, no can all time live. He come my boss place, kill him one day tlee chickee, bleak him leg one duck, and not for eat, for play! You tink my boss buy chickee make play for you dog?"

Volcanic emotion on female visage.

Hi Chang (continues with solemnly warning voice): "My boss say come 'gain te house, maybe so not come any more."

Female (with air of an avenging goddess): "It's an evil man that would take the life of a mite of a senseless beast that's the sole protection of two lonely women. We'll set the law on him."

Hi Chang (placid triumph shining out of his eye-slits): "My boss lich man, do all same he like."

The other party (in haughty scorn): "Rich, and cares so much about a chicken or so? We'll pay for his precious chickens."

Hi Chang (with equally lofty scorn): "He no care chickee, got plenty money buy chickee. He care howl! Dog come make big noise; my boss say, 'kill blank

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beast.' Next time," an impressive pause, "you not see 'gain. Goo'-by." Turns away.

Female (with pursuing shriek of expostulation): "Here, you Chinaman, we'll pay *anything*, tell your boss."

Chinaman (with three unrelenting shakes of head): "No pay for howl!" Closes gate, and trips away, while Odelia makes fierce gestures at his disappearing pigtail.

Languid voice from interior of house: "Odelia, what *is* all the talking and noise?"

Odelia (rushing in direction of voice): "It's our own Waggy that I'm just after taking from the clutches of a murderous-hearted pagan."

Voice within (full of keenest anxiety): "Oh, tell me, tell me, is he safe?"

Odelia (in choking voice): "For this time, yes; but for the next time he goes he's the same as dead. All because of a few chickens." And she crouches in a Niobe pose in the porch near a window.

Voice (through blinds): "But, Odelia, we will pay for any wretched chickens Wagner may kill."

Odelia (despairingly): "And wasn't I telling the sinner just that? And don't he answer me that its the howl his Turk of a master makes a murderous talk about. What's a little noise?"

(Sigh from within): "The poor man may be nervous, may have trouble on his mind—most of us have. But, Odelia, if Wagner *will* go there and make a noise, what *can* we do?"

Odelia (emphatically): "We can make haste to get out of this pagan country, all alive with fiends walking about with pigtails."

(Voice within querulously): "We cannot, Odelia, we cannot. You know that only in a far-off, hidden place like this do I find peace of mind. Bring me Wagner, he understands. I'm never so near forgetting that I'm away from dear old England as when I have him by me."

* * * * *

A farmhouse painted into glaring freshness, general environment indicating recently expended money. A gentleman sits on the porch, his feet on the railing, his hat far down over his eyes. Hi Chang approaches, accompanied by the ubiquitous Waggy, attached as usual to a string.

Hi Chang (addressing soles of feet on railing): "Me catchee him dog one time more."

No response.

Chinaman (in higher key): "This time he kill tlee looster, one little chickee."

Rumbling Voice (under hat): "Feed the beast on chickens, mutton, Durham bulls, Jersey pigs, and other vermin. It's just as profitable a way of disposing of them as any I have found."

Long, reverberating howl from Wagner. Feet on railing come down with a thundering clap.

"Hang the brute!"

Hi Chang (sententiously and approvingly): "All light—hang him light away."

Gentleman tosses a half-smoked cigar aside, and entering the house, partakes of something out of a bottle. He looks at his watch.

"Half-past-four only; thought I'd been scorching on that porch three hours. This is the striving, active life which was to make a new man of me, and choke off all morbid retrospections. The howl of a miserable little cur starts the most insane fancies in my brain. I'd better be moving farther on somewhere—try a South Sea island, or the climatic influences of Kamschatka."

He hears outside an intermingling of pigeon English and canine moans, and he strides to the window, and exclaims:

"By Jupiter! what's the pagan up to? I say, Chang, let the beast alone! Are you idiot enough to suppose I'll let you hang the harmless whelp in full view of my windows, or anywhere else?"

Hi Chang: "No hang him? Well, what must do now?"

The Boss: "Let him go! Keep him out of my sight and hearing. Give him a beefsteak."

* * * * *

Hi Chang at a table chopping hash in time to his favourite melody. He hears approaching steps. He smiles and blinks in response to some idea in his heathen brain.

Continues to chop energetically.

Low, sweet voice at the door: "I am looking for a little lost dog."

Hi Chang (dropping hash-knife as if shot, turns to see a young and handsome lady, who is certainly not Odelia. The pagan, breathless with wonderment, seems about to prostrate himself in Oriental adoration. He speaks in honeyed tones: "Dog b'long you? My, my! me not know b'long you! Me no tink you—me tink *ole* womee. She comes here, talkee heap bad; me talk velly poli', and all time she get more mad."

Lady (sweetly); "Yes. Well, it is my dog, and I have come for him. Perhaps he had lost his way, and somebody here is taking care of him for me?"

Hi Chang (his face one all-illuminating grin): "Yes, lose him way. He come here; he likee stay; he good dog; me fix nice for him. One minnee—me show you."

He vanishes through the inner door, and returns after a short absence.

"You likee come now—me show you."

The lady is conducted up a narrow, dark stairway, which ends in a dim little attic-room. She does not like the look of things at all. Chinaman divines her feeling, and turns to give a reassuring wag of his head.

"All light—you no flaid. Now look see."

He throws open a small door, and reveals a closet of a room, furnished with a Chinese coat on the floor and a plate of food. And there, devouring the food with frightful voracity, is the lost dog.

Lady emotional; Wagner more responsive to hunger than to affection.

Hi Chang (placidly): "You tink me no good to dog? You see nice loom, nice bed; feed him tlee time one day, heap high tone, all samee home."

Voice below singing. Lady starts up with alarmed exclamation. Dog howls.

Voice below: "Where is that howling dervish of a brute? Here, you, Hi Chang!"

Lady (in whisper): "S—h! Waggy!" To Chinaman: "Do—do show me another way down!"

Hi Chang: "No more way. Boss good man; he no mad you."

Waggy's wail continues. Gentleman stamps up the stairway. Lady retreats into the darkest corner.

Gentleman (with ferocity): "Am I to have my house turned into a kennel for this yelping mongrel? Didn't I tell you I must be rid of him?"

Hi Chang (gently): "You tell me feed him cow, sheep chickee——"

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Gentleman begins to give expression to his feelings, but stops, astounded, on seeing a dimly outlined figure in a corner.

Hi Chang (in explanation): "Lady catch him dog."

Gentleman: "You will kindly excuse any violent expressions, madam, but I confess the repeated visits of your dog have been rather annoying to me."

No response. Gentleman irately and curiously approaches figure. He stares, and stares harder; holds his breath, and finally exclaims: "Thunder and Mars! Impossible! Yes, without a doubt!"

Lady (in muffled tones): "I am here only for my dog. I had to come myself to get him. I thought some *kind old farmer* lived here."

She makes a movement to pass the gentleman, who holds out a detaining hand.

"But, Millicent, this extraordinary meeting must be explained."

Millicent (scornfully): "You should know that I *never* make explanations."

Gentleman: "But I was sure you had gone to Iceland."

Millicent: "Yes? You thought yourself sure of a good many things. Who said I was in Iceland?"

Gentleman (subduedly): "No one *said* so; I guessed so, and so came straight away here to the other side of the world."

Millicent (sardonically): "So did I, by an unfortunate coincidence of ideas."

A good deal of animated discussion follows. Hi Chang delicately retires into the small room, keeping one eye fitted to the narrow chink of the door. His reflections: "Me know now what for he so much tlinkee, and likee give dog sheep, bull, chickee. Have big fuss; he go way. He sit down, tink, tink, all samee not plentee womee in world. He heap mad; he likee never more get please. She come; she look velly nicee; he forget one minnee. She no forget; she talk make him solly; womee heap smart; man no can all time find out."

Lady: "You grant that you gave me more than provocation?"

Gentleman (abjectedly): "Yes, you were justified, entirely. But a man can't help the mad things he does when he is jealous."

Millicent (speaking fast): "I don't in the least refer to things you did when you were jealous—if you were so. It was the *real* indignities I suffered through *her*. And, by the way, where is she now?"

Gentleman: "I have not seen her since that hideous week at Goodwood."

Millicent: "Ah! really, how wonderfully, with what fortitude, you endured the horrors of that week. *We* noticed, didn't we, Wagner?"

Gentleman (grappling at diversion): "No wonder that beast's howl was so familiar."

Millicent (languidly): "Wagner we will now leave, and promise Mr. Vandervere not to disturb him again."

Mr. Vandervere (in commotion): "Millicent, you cannot think of breaking off in this cold-blooded way?"

Millicent (sighing): "You seem happy; I—exist at least, in peace and obscurity. A life of solitude and loneliness is not so unendurable as one in which mind and heart are daily tortured."

Hi Chang (sighing responsively): "She get him all likee she want now. She talk heap pity."

Much persuasion and entreaty on one side; reminiscence and reproach on the other.

Millicent (finally, with decision): "You admit, then, that your affair with that person was a disgrace to yourself and a wrong to me?"

Vandervere (expostulating weakly): "But, dear Millicent, in justice to her I could not admit that much."

Millicent (half-way downstairs): "So you prefer to do an injustice to your *wife?* Very well. Consider this meeting merely an accident. We continue apart."

Vandervere (desperately): "No; I know, dearest, I did make a fool of myself, and she was imprudent."

They are now quite downstairs. Hi Chang tip-toes out into vacated hall, grinning and wobbling his chubby neck.

"Wifee heap smart; she say, 'Me do long, what for you make me do?' Then husban' tink he may be so velly bad man." He pensively resumes hash-chopping in kitchen. Enter Odelia tumultuously, making confused exclamations. Hi Chang chops on.

Odelia: "Isn't there a tongue in your head to answer?" Hi Chang swirls round, waving hash-chopper and grinning fiendishly.

Hi Chang (with lightning transformation into grotesque mirth): "Before you lose him dog, now you lose him lady. Evly time lose him something, you come ask me."

Odelia (gurgling with rage): "Oh, it's not me that minds your impudence. It's my lady I'm looking for, and I'll find her or die."

Hi Chang (in a squeaking whisper): "One minee, me show you. My boss catchee him dog, then catch him lady. He take outside, and—" (he makes a few hideously-significant passes with the knife, unpleasantly close to Odelia's throat, smiling a ghastly smile as he does so).

Odelia (with hollow lightness of tone): "And so you're thinking to make a fool of me entirely?"

Hi Chang: "You no b'lieve?" He slides over to window, and gazes round; then, stepping out of door, calls to excited Odelia): "You come, me show you." She follows. Chinaman, still dangling hash-chopper, and stepping cat-like, makes a winding course among the outbuildings. He stops at a small tool-house near the orchard, and flattens himself against the wall, one eye peering round the corner. He beckons to Odelia: "S-sh! no make him noise."

Odelia plants herself against the wall, and thrusts her head out above the Chinaman's.

"In the name of St. Patrick!"

Object of exclamation—two figures side by side on narrow box under apple-tree, a dog stretched across the two laps.

Odelia (after long study of the scene): "It's the live man, and not his ghost. Everything made up, and no separation, after all she's been saying. And me wearing my soul away three months in this pagan land."

Hi Chang (reprovingly): "No make him fuss, spoil evlyting. Velly pletty lady! Me work hard, get money, go back China, catch him wifee, heap fat, littee foot. Tlee hundled dollar wifee! You likee catch him husban'? Me flaid take big money—maybe tlee t'ousan' dollar, eh?"

H. Godstone.

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A NEW DELILAH.

So this was her honeymoon. And here she sat alone at ten o'clock in the evening in the dreary hotel parlour, whose bare walls and shabby furniture had become so detestable. She might have gone with him to the concert. But no, she would never enter that hall again. She had sworn it.

Yet she knew her husband's whole repertory by heart, knew the precise bar in his serenade when he would close his eyes, the passage in his scherzo when he would toss back his hair so gracefully. How studied and unnatural it all seemed! She fancied she could see him now, bowing with a faint smile, as though oppressed by the applause which thundered around him.

Oh, how wildly the audiences here applauded, especially the women. Now they were pressing forward to the stage to shake hands with him. They would wait for him at the exit of the hall to thank him for the great pleasure he had afforded them and throng about him to the very door of the carriage.

It was so yesterday, and the day before, and every day. Mme. Andre felt like crying, especially at the thought of her adventure yesterday, when a crowd of feminine worshippers separated her from her husband, and he, evidently desiring to escape enthusiasm which had become annoying, in the belief that his young wife sat beside him, had driven off without her.

There she had stood, and was forced to hear these women rave about the "gifted man," how handsome he was, the enthralling power of his glance, and, above all, his superb hair.

Yes, his undeniably magnificent locks seemed to please these enthusiasts more than anything else, more even than his skill as an artist.

And the notes he received! She had just read one. Of course, the writer begged for a lock of hair, and he would probably give it to her.

The paper fell from her trembling hands. Her slender fingers clenched convulsively as with compressed lips she sank back into her chair. Oh, their flatteries and cajolery would make him a recreant, a recreant to her and to his art!

She began mentally to enumerate his attractions. The stern expression of her delicate features softened, a tender light stole into her brown eyes. Then, rising nurriedly, she paced up and down the room several times, and her pretty face assumed a very resolute expression.

Surely he would come soon, her Richard, her beloved husband. How had she lived so long without him? It had grown very late. She slipped on an elegant blue silk tea gown, drew the pins from her hair and let it fall in curling locks round her shoulders. Then she turned down the lamp, leant back in the armchair and shut her eyes, as if asleep, and waited for him.

She soon heard his step, the door of the room was thrown open, but on the threshold the tall figure paused, and Andre moved forward on tiptoe.

"Richard, is it you?" asked a voice from the armchair.

"Ah, sweetheart, are you still awake? That is very kind of you." He kissed her. "It has been such an evening, Elly, such an evening!"

Removing his long cloak, he turned up the light. The clear glow fell upon his handsome figure. The regularity of the pale features was rendered more striking by the sparkle of the dark eyes, now glittering with joyous excitement. But the most remarkable thing about his appearance was the long, black hair, which fell in soft, waving locks nearly to the shoulders, giving a striking character to the man's whole person.

He took his seat at his young wife's side.

"Ah, if you would only come with me again, Elly," he said, as he lighted a cigarette. "The enthusiasm, the applause, the flowers! You know I do not set any undue value on such things, but it ought to make you very proud to see your husband so much applauded."

"But it doesn't," she answered with a somewhat forced laugh. "To tell the truth, it makes me feel as if I were quite too insignificant. Besides, dearest, I love in you less the artist, than the husband of my foolish heart, and you are more that at home than in the concert hall."

"You are right. Here I am a man, here I may be, and therefore, you see——"

He gave her a hasty kiss, then slipped out of his dress coat into a comfortable lounge jacket and threw himself down on the sofa, while Elly lighted the lamp under the tea-kettle.

For a time they chatted gaily together. Richard had stretched himself out at full length. Elly sat at the table beside him, and her fingers played at times with his curls.

He was speaking of his programme for the next concert.

"We must continue our journey soon, Elly. I want to drain the cup of success to the dregs. One more like to-day, and—oh, oh, Elly," he suddenly exclaimed, rather crossly, "what are you doing? You have certainly pulled out some of my hair."

"Why, my dear husband—"

"Yes, you have. See, there are at least a dozen."

He raised his head and looked at her reproachfully.

"Why, Elly," he said, "what is the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing, Richard," she replied, smiling as she endeavoured to hide the strange excitement which had taken possession of her. "But perhaps you have forgotten that during our engagement you promised me a lock of your hair?"

"And because I haven't kept my word you want to pull out hairs enough, one by one, to make a lock? You are certainly one of the most affectionate wives that can be imagined."

"Oh, no. If I really pulled it a little, it was purely accidental. Perhaps I moved my hand rather quickly, because I was vexed by the thought that you had not kept your promise. Yes, that was it."

"At that time, sweetheart, there was no travelling. I was with you, with all my hair. So you needed no memento."

"All the same, you didn't keep your promise, and I don't like it a bit, especially as you have been kinder to total strangers. Let me cut off the lock now, please. May I?"

"But, little wife, consider the season of the year."

"Only one little lock, Richard, where you can't miss it."

A pair of scissors glittered in her hand.

"May I?"

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Her voice trembled.

"Oh, I don't care, Elly. But—"

Her agitated face vanished an instant amid his dark curls. He felt a kiss pressed on them, then heard a hissing noise.

"For goodness sake, Elly, in front on my forehead! And so much? Good Heavens!"

He rushed towards the mirror, but the room suddenly became perfectly dark. His wife had put out the light. Two soft arms clasped him round the neck, and Elly, leaning her head upon his breast, began to cry like a child that knows it has done wrong and deserves punishment.

Richard could not understand the violence of his little wife's grief, but when she begged so wildly for his forgiveness for what she had done, he smilingly granted the pardon.

* * * * *

The bright morning sun shone into the room.

"Disfigured; I am utterly disfigured. How could you do it?"

Richard turned angrily from the mirror and seized his hat and cane.

"Good-bye!" he called loudly, to wake his wife, who was still asleep. She started up.

"Where are you going so early, Richard?"

"To the barber to have my hair cut." His voice sounded actually threatening.

"Richard, my dear husband, you see, I wanted—" Then, conscious of guilt, she paused.

"Ah! So you meant to do it!"

He placed himself where the light streamed full upon him, took off his hat and stared at her.

Elly was startled at her own work. From his forehead to the right temple a clump of hair stood stiffly up, giving Richard's angry expression a somewhat comical aspect.

He rushed out of the room, while his young wife murmured amid her tears: "Perhaps he won't forgive me; but it could not be helped"

* * * * *

The first part of the programme was over. During the pause the great concert hall began to fill, for now Richard Andre was to play. His admirers poured in and took their places in the front row. As if by an electric shock the thrill of expectation was communicated to the rest of the audience, which so far had been somewhat apathetic, only the pause lasted somewhat too long, longer than usual.

At last the artist appeared on the stage and was greeted by thunders of applause. Several bouquets flew through the air and fell at his feet.

But the enthusiasm soon died away. The hands which had clapped so madly suddenly paused. A strange murmur ran through the hall. People cast inquiring glances at one another.

This was not the artist whose personal beauty had been so remarkable, but a very ordinary man, in no way different from thousands of others. Why, he looked almost ridiculous, for his clipped hair stood up like bristles all over his head!

Richard bowed his thanks for the enthusiastic reception, whose abrupt close somewhat vexed him. Then, as he again stood erect and placed the violin on his breast, he made the movement of the head with which he had formerly shaken his hair back from his brow.

During the first few bars of the music he noticed the uneasiness in the hall and felt somewhat embarrassed by it. Then he became absorbed in playing and heard only the exquisite notes which he lured from his instrument. "He surpasses himself," the connoisseurs and critics whispered, while the orchestra and conductor gazed as though enchanted at the great musician, who had forgotten himself and his surroundings.

When the piece was over, Richard once more became conscious of his surroundings and stood waiting for the customary response from the audience. Here and there were tokens of approval, but the majority remained strangely indifferent. This state of affairs continued until the close of the performance.

"He looks not only hideous, but ridiculous," whispered a lady just in front of the stage to her neighbour.

"Yes, what induced him to do such a thing? He looks like a convict, or a clown. And those ears!"

"He has forgotten his wig," said a third.

Andre heard the remarks, as the exasperated ladies probably intended, and with his vanity deeply wounded he left the scene of his former triumphs. His music was no longer appreciated. He had become an object of ridicule. And he owed all this to Elly, his foolish, jealous wife.

He clenched his teeth, and his face flushed. She should pay for it.

* * * * *

Richard had not noticed that Elly had entered the carriage with him. He was thinking solely of the humiliation he had suffered—he, who had played like a demigod.

Elly had leant timidly back into a corner and was crying. Whenever the lamps of a passing carriage cast a ray of light into theirs she gazed anxiously into the face of her husband, who sat staring into vacancy. She would rather have endured anything, reproaches, even his contempt, but Richard's silence oppressed her too heavily.

How wretched he must be, the proud artist, so accustomed to the incense of applause!

"Richard," she whispered pleadingly at last, "forgive me. I know I have been very wrong."

He made no reply.

"Just one word, Richard," she sobbed bitterly, "just one. You see—the notes you gave me to read—all asked for locks of hair, till at last they drove me wild."

"To think that you should have been there, Elly," he muttered, "at this concert!"

"Oh, how I suffered for you!" she cried.

"How they treated me!" he burst forth, clenching his hands. "And why? It's incredible, but true! Because—I had had my hair cut!"

"Yes, Richard, and the favour of such people was your pride, your glory! What do they know of your art? And you played magnificently to-night. I knew it; I can value you, even without your hair!"

Richard again lapsed into silence. But suddenly, before the carriage stopped at the hotel, he threw his arms round her, clasping her passionately to him.

"Elly," he gasped, "you are right! I have learnt it now. The lesson hurts, but it has cured me. Such external vanities are unworthy of a true artist. I owe this recognition to you, my new Delilah, and—and from this day my hair shall stay as it is now."

Again the light from a passing carriage shone upon Elly's face, and Richard saw that she was smiling roguishly through her tears.

"Listen, Richard," she whispered, "we will let it grow again! There is no danger now, for you or me, and, with your long hair, dearest—you certainly are a handsomer man."

F. Germaine.

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THE DISCOMFITURE OF THE DUCHESS.

MRS. CONIGSBY was bewildered, and for a moment hesitated, then, with a bow to her companion, and a murmured excuse that she must find her husband, she walked towards a large marquee on the lawn.

With a look of surprised admiration Lord Harry watched her retreating figure and then left the summer-house, where he had been chatting with Mrs. Conigsby, and joined a group of ladies who were drinking tea and discussing their neighbours' shortcomings. The occasion was the village show held in the Rectory garden under the distinguished patronage of Her Grace the Duchess of Porcastle.

Mrs. Conigsby, a bride of two months, had been persuaded by her husband to come to the show, though she had only been at home a week and knew none of her neighbours. Fortunately, she met in Lord Harry an old acquaintance, and the two had been discussing old times and mutual friends when the Duchess, Lord Harry's stepmother, with some of her bosom companions, sat down on a seat at the side of the summerhouse out of sight but not of sound.

"A very ordinary little person, I can't think what he saw in her," one lady said, evidently resuming a discussion.

"About the plainest woman I have ever seen," declared another, "knows how to dress though."

"A woman of no family and doubtful antecedents."

"Cecil Conigsby has made a fool of himself," was the verdict of the Duchess. Half an hour before this same lady had expressed herself as "so charmed to meet Cecil's wife," but that was because Cecil was standing by, and he could have told some unpleasant things about her which she would far rather remained secret.

Lord Harry joined the group, and after a friendly greeting remarked that he had just had the pleasure of renewing an old acquaintanceship.

"I met Mrs. Conigsby at Nice two years ago."

"One meets all sorts of people at Nice," sneered Her Grace.

Lord Harry smiled.

"Nevertheless, I hope you will allow me to accompany you when you call upon her to-morrow," he replied.

The Duchess frowned and opened her lips to remonstrate, but, thinking better, she answered coldly, "Oh, certainly."

"After all," said Mrs. Nugget later to a friend, "we will have to call."

And so through the agency of Lord Harry "the county" called on Mrs. Conigsby, but that lady's cold reception of them jarred very considerably, for "the woman of no family" (for who had ever heard of the Kitcheners?) had plenty of pride.

Agnes Conigsby had led a lonely life since her step-brother, Charles Faudell, had left the country six years ago. When their mother died Charles found himself sole guardian of this plain, studious child. It had been no light task to look after such a fortune as was hers, and as he was a careless and gay young man, consequently, the love between them was not great.

Six years ago there came into his life the cause of his undoing. He fell in love with the beautiful Constance Fane. Like most visitors at Nice, Charles Faudell spent the greater part of his time at Monte Carlo, and one day, while watching the players round the roulette table he was struck by the keen and excited look on a face, which, but for the too obvious signs of the gambling fever, would have been lovely.

After losing the pile of gold and notes at her side, the young lady rose from the table and gloomily rejoined a party of friends.

With the hope of seeing her again Charles returned to the Casino the next afternoon. She was there again, this time apparently winning. Later on in the day he procured an introduction at the theatre. Their acquaintanceship soon ripened into something much deeper on Charles's part, he became her devoted slave, and as such she treated him.

About a fortnight later Charles accompanied her to the Casino, and left her at the same table where he had first seen her and where, she declared, she intended to win back all her losses.

On returning to his hotel he found a note from Constance bidding him to come to the Hotel de l'Europe at once, as she wished to speak to him on urgent business.

He found her in her brother's sitting-room looking pale and haggard.

"I've lost all," she exclaimed, "all, more than all, you must save me. I must have money at once! The Count threatens to tell my brother, unless I pay him or fulfil my pledge."

"Tell Sir John what? You are speaking in conundrums. He knew you played, what is this other sin, Constance?"

The girl looked at him with wild eyes.

"Lend me the money," she sobbed. "Oh! save me, from the count. My brother will turn me out of doors."

"The Count, you mean that waiter fellow there, what of him?"

"He lent me money, and unless I pay him or—or marry him—"

"Marry him, marry that buffoon!"

"Marry him or pay him £1,000," she answered.

"And you come to me, whom you have so cruelly deceived, to help you?"

"Oh, spare me! Save me from his clutches!"

"I really haven't the money, you must go to your brother, it is his business," and so he left her.

When the first spasm of indignation had spent itself, more generous feelings prevailed. He remembered only her pleading looks and the love he bore her. He forgot her sin, her gross deception. He could only help her by getting money from England, so he sent the following message to his sister:—

To AGNES KITCHENER.
Please forward as much money as possible, immediately.
CHARLES.

Agnes was naturally alarmed. Being at her wits' end she had recourse to the family solicitor, and as the result of her visit she started for Nice without delay, with visions of her brother in the hands of the money lenders.

In the meantime, there had been more trouble in the Hotel de l'Europe. A cheque for £1,000 signed with Sir John Fane's name had been presented at the Crédit Lyonnaise. It was soon discovered to be a forgery. Sir John was furious. Himself an austere and upright man, a crime such as this seemed unpardonable in his eyes.

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He personally followed up every clue to the forger, but so far without success.

When Agnes arrived she found Charles in a fearful state of despondency; he made a clean breast of the whole story, telling her of his love for Constance Fane, her losses at the table, her unholy bargain with the Count, and, finally, the history of the forged cheque.

"She did it, Agnes, she forged the cheque. Great Heavens! how can I help her?"

"Don't! Let her take the consequences," cried the girl vehemently, "she has only herself to blame, let her marry this waiter, she must have known what sort of a man he was."

"Stop please, you don't understand, Agnes. I love her, and if she were as black as Jezebel I would give my life to save her name from being dragged in the dust. And you must help me. To-morrow I shall leave Europe. No, don't try to prevent me. It's no use, I have made up my mind; I shall write to Sir John to-night and tell him my losses at the tables had made me desperate, and that I took advantage of his absence to abstract his cheque-book and forge his name. You will send him the letter after I have gone."

In spite of all Agnes' remonstrances Charles persisted in carrying out this deep laid plot to save Constance's honour at the expense of his own, and so it came about that he left Europe. Constance Fane accepted his sacrifice in silence, and three months later married the old Duke of Porcastle.

Agnes' indignation knew no bounds, but her lips were sealed. She felt terribly lonely and helpless, everything seemed black. Her brother, an outcast, herself ostensibly snubbed by her former friends. Life had reached its lowest ebb in her estimation, but the meeting with Cecil Conigsby meant the turn of the tide. Each day the waves of happiness crept higher and higher; for she loved him as only a woman who had suffered could love; and on the man's side, what had he to give her in return? Admiration may be, but not love. She had mistaken the signs, it was a blissful ignorance at first, but the rude awakening was yet to come. The little cloud was there, and it was growing. Because she had no family connections to boast about she must be a nobody in the eyes of the neighbouring gentry, and because she was necessarily reticent about her former life she was considered stiff and uninteresting. Even her wealth did not help her, for Cecil took care that no one should say that *he* had married her for money.

The Duchess was not at all pleased, she disliked Mrs. Conigsby before she ever set eyes upon the little minx who had had the audacity to marry a man whom she considered her particular slave; and because there was a likelihood of losing him, he at once became an object of greater value and more worthy of attention on her part. Consequently, time after time Agnes found herself alone, and growing morbid and restless.

Cecil was at the Castle or out shooting with the Castle party; he seemed to care less and less about his wife, for he could only love where all the world admired.

There was to be a large house party at the Castle and a fête, to which the aristocracy of the neighbourhood were invited.

Agnes received a card of invitation to the latter with her name only on it. This she took in some surprise to her husband; he appeared embarrassed, but at length managed to blurt out somewhat apologetically.

"The fact is, Agnes, the Duchess has been kind enough to invite me to join the house party."

"What!" she exclaimed, turning pale with anger, "she has asked you without me, I don't understand."

"It is simple enough, they have all the ladies they want, and to tell the truth, the Duchess was quite right in saying what she did. She meant it very kindly, purely out of consideration for you, but you know, Agnes, you would not go down with the rest of the party."

His wife looked at him with flashing eyes.

"In fact," she said, "I am not good enough for them and for you."

"No, no, my dear girl, how you do rush on. Constance would never say such a thing, but the card playing and the—"

"Don't trouble to find excuses, I quite understand," and the expression of her firm mouth showed that the insult had gone too far to be forgiven easily.

Agnes was no saint. While yet she was boiling over with anger she went to the study, and began to put down all the details of her brother's confession, that she might see how his sacrifice appeared in black and white. Perhaps she had exaggerated its virtue, perhaps it was a matter of no importance that this woman had trodden him down and was now trying to destroy her life too.

As she put the confession down on paper an idea came to her. She would write the story in the form of a novel, she could do it, she knew; she had the power now that she was roused. Without loss of time she began, altering all names but leaving facts and descriptions true to life. She was soon absorbed in her work, how her pen ran on, how vividly she depicted the scene of the Duchess at the gaming table, overcome by her desire for money. Who could not recognise the lovely, contorted face as described by Agnes! "Revenge is sweet indeed," mused Agnes, when at the end of a fortnight her task was completed.

Should all the publishers refuse it she would publish it herself, but a better fate was in store for her than that. Standing on its merits the book was excellent, the style clear and concise, and the story interesting. One of the leading firms of publishers took it at once, and Agnes eagerly awaited the day of publication.

In her state of nervous excitement it was impossible for her to remain at home, the issue at stake was too great. What would Charles think of her conduct? But she must not think of that, at all costs she must expose this woman before whom all bowed down, destroy Cecil's infatuation for her.

She therefore visited her old home in the north and did not return home until after the book was published and had begun to be talked about. She had sent Cecil a review copy, his surprise and consternation were great. There was no doubt in his mind who was the real heroine of the story; the Duchess betrayed herself completely.

Royalty had come and gone, and still Cecil was at the Castle, but the talk consequent on the publishing of the book drove the Duchess out of the country. She was routed completely, her anger was only equalled by her dismay.

All at once Agnes found herself a woman of fame, and as a celebrity she began to take her rightful position in the county. Now that the world had found out the merits of his wife, Cecil began to do so too.

"Was it love?" Agnes asked herself at times when he would seek her society and pay her loverlike attentions, "the love of such a man is not worth while having really, but there," and she would smile as she kissed him, "he is my husband."

R. E.

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That Strange Affair of Alwood's!

I KNOW there is much in this strange, brief story which will be scoffed at and doubted. No matter! Such minor details do not count in the least. I mean to keep straight to the facts, and write down here just what occurred exactly, as best I can remember.

It all happened in that far away land some people speak of as Burma, where the phoongyees and pogodas are, and the tamarinds.

Alwood voted this Burma one of the finest countries in the world. He liked the eternal drowsy quiet of it, the never-ending peace. But that was before the trouble had fallen. Afterwards, ah, afterwards, it was a curiously different business!

You may wonder, perhaps, how I came to know each startling, bewildering incident of that strange affair of Alwood's! The explanation is easy, and readily given. We were chums—with one of those big friendships between us that only Burma can bring about—and sanctions as something almost holy.

Therefore, I was with him through it all, and knew.

He could hide nothing from me—he ceased to try. And when, one lonely evening, I realised the horrible truth, my brain fairly reeled, the utter consternation of it, the miserable, harrowing fear!

Alwood's mind was being tampered with in some uncanny, baffling, diabolical way! But how? Why? Wherefore? These questions gave me much groundwork for honest reflection. The answers, though, were far to seek, and seemed impossible.

At first the doctors said he had developed a "Burma head," and ought to go home. That was the uttermost they could do for him. The rest was left to me. Burma head, indeed! I can laugh now at the cheerful absurdity of it. Alwood's affair was no Burma head! Then what? And whither was it tending?

The first real change I noticed was late one night. We had been together to see the burning of a phoongyee and stayed on for the poey. Alwood delighted in these strange customs of this quaint land of the Golden Foot. He even hoped to make a book thereon, when he had taken his pension and quietly settled down in the years to come. If ever that book does see the light, I wonder if it will contain an account of what I am writing here? Hardly, I fancy. Alwood would not be equal to the task.

I well remember that night—the night of the phoongyee burning, I mean, after we had returned to the bungalow we shared in common.

The moon was shedding a clear, transparent light everywhere. From the Burmese bazaar came the perpetual music of the tom-tom, borne to us faintly enough, but very distinctly. And the sound, too, of weird incantations droned forth with odd, persistent monotony. It was the poey still going ahead.

We had some dinner on the verandah—Alwood and I. My companion talked but little, for a wonder. He was thinking, doubtless—and listening. When the meal was over I rose and went to my room. Returning quite two hours later I found Alwood just where I had left him—his eyes fixed with a peculiar, fascinating stare on a small, squat, golden image of Buddha Gautama, reposing magnanimously on the table before him.

He did not speak.

This puzzled me. I sat down in absolute silence, waiting. At last his lips moved, and he said something in a voice that might hardly have belonged to him.

"The—second—reincarnation—" he muttered slowly.

I laughed heartily at the tragedy in his tone of manner.

"Esoteric Buddhism again, old chap," I asked, "or brandy pawnee?"

His gaze on the brazen image never flinched. "The—second—reincarnation—is—"

"The devil!" I interrupted grimly.

"Yes, I believe it all, my friend. I am a Buddhist," he muttered on.

"It must have been the whisky," I concluded. "Haven't tasted it yet, myself. But, by Jove, if that mess sergeant has tricked us again, I'll find an effective means of being even with him!"

Suddenly Alwood's queer mood changed. He became more like his usual self. He started and looked at me questioningly. "What's the matter, old boy?" he asked vaguely. "I've been dreaming."

"Yes," I answered laconically. "You've been dreaming."

"Well, it's a night to dream. What a country this is, old fellow!"

Mannerly was addressing himself to Alwood now. Evidently they had met before. And never till my dying day will I forget the gaze Alwood fixed on the other. Small wonder he grew whiter and whiter with such eyes as those staring steadily into his! Yes, these two had met before. My brain was in a whirl, the new thoughts flooded in so rapidly. Where would it all end, I wondered. And when?

My fierce determination was taken—to fathom, if possible, and soon, the weird, strange business.

"Miss Brierwood," I said to the little girl my chum had always loved, "did this Mannerly and our Alwood know each other intimately before they met here?"

"Oh, yes," she answered uneasily, "but they were never friendly. Mr. Mannerly is a dangerous man if anyone tries to thwart him."

"I felt you believed that all along, Miss Brierwood," I blurted out, with more candour than gallantry. "Then why are you allowing yourself to be drawn into an engagement with him?"

"An engagement?" she echoed wearily.

"Yes," I answered warmly. "It is leading to it. Everyone can see. You were acquainted with him before either of you came to this station—but the way he monopolises you speaks of much more than mere acquaintance—aye, even friendship. He looks upon you as his own—you who in reality belong to poor old Alwood. Why will you not have patience a little, and wait till Jack is better?"

"You have no right to talk to me like this!" she flashed indignantly. Then her mood changed.

"Ah, if only I could, I would wait till the end of my life," she murmured quietly. "But it is not possible.

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Mr. Mannerly wants to marry me. You don't know that man, Mr. Whitely!"

"No—then, by Heaven, I will!" I exclaimed passionately. "He has worked mischief enough already! His game is well-nigh over!"

* * * * *

I have said that much in this strange, brief story will be scoffed at and doubted. I have no explanation to offer. My plan was to stick to facts all through and leave the rest. It has been a steadfast purpose, and wonderfully concentrated. How useless to attempt anything further. The story I have told truthfully, diligently. The explanation must come from elsewhere. I am powerless.

Therefore, I return to plain facts again, and hand over the probable solution to others.

It was late one evening when I was nearing our bungalow, late after the paperchase of the afternoon, and the billiard tournament in the mess. To-morrow Miss Brierwood and Mannerly were to be married, a quiet little wedding, with no bridal ceremony whatever.

I was hot against it, because of poor old Alwood. Mannerly laughed lightly at my vehemence. He did not care in the least that he was robbing another fellow of his love. The other fellow was mad. No one heeded him now.

Mad! Ha, ha! It was a capital notion! A peculiar madness, truly! My mind—in a tumult—was running on these things as I reached the bungalow. I was angry with myself that the mystery remained a mystery still—that I had not been able to prevent this hateful marriage on the morrow.

Ah! What was that? The sounds of loud talking and scuffling! I paused on the wooden steps leading to the verandah. Alwood's tones were wild and excited—Mannerly's came at uncertain intervals, faint and stifling.

A few seconds later, and I had hurried to the spot.

Alwood—towering high above Mannerly—held him fixed by the throat, yelling into his ear some insanely improbable story, as it seemed to me then.

To my further astonishment I now caught sight of Ellman, the native doctor. He was sitting looking on, a serene smile of contentment playing about the angles of his intelligent features.

"What is it?" I gasped. "There'll be murder!"

"They're right enough," he answered contentedly. "Mannerly deserves all that, and more. I hope he'll get it, the English devil!"

"Will you explain, Ellman?" I demanded, with desperate quiet.

"Presently," he answered. "After that brute has had his deserts."

But I was not with the doctor there. I could see that the affair had already gone too far. I separated them as quickly as possible.

"I meant to kill him," Alwood said slowly, and for the first time in many, many weeks, he was his own, true self.

"I meant to kill him," he repeated. "But let him go, the cur! He has played old Harry with me, Whitely. Our friend Ellman, here, will tell you the whole story. It was he who saved me from that living hell!"

I looked from one to the other.

"The story!" I said hastily, appealing to Ellman in my eager excitement and wonder.

"The point is," he answered tersely, "whether that English devil remains here to recount his part of the narrative or disappears at once."

"Let him go," Alwood put in steadily. "The sight of the coward sickens me."

He slunk off, and from that day to this I have never set eyes on him again, nor has Alwood. Let him thank his stars for that, wherever he may be.

"I must make the story necessarily very brief," Ellman continued, when we three were alone.

"On my way down to Rangoon, after I had met you that night at Moran's, I rehearsed in my mind repeatedly the symptoms of your friend. I had an idea, for the symptoms were not new to me.

"I went to see a great phoongyee—my particular aquaintance. He is a most marvellous man—next, I think, to the Great Lama himself.

"A saintly man, the phoongyee—and a mighty intellect. I had long talks with him, and spoke of this poor fellow here. He looked grave, the phoongyee. 'You know what it is?' I asked, in our own language, of course—Burmese. The phoongyee cannot speak English at all. I have spoken it from the cradle.

"'Yes, I know what it is,' he made me answer. 'When you go back to your station, I also go. My people up there are glad when I visit them.'

"On the flotilla, coming here, he completed the history. Once when he was merely a boy in one of the monasteries of the Grand Lama, a wandering soul gave him a go den image of the Great One, the Buddha. It was a holy thing to him—his very life. Burmese and phoongyees, remember, hold faithfully by the doctrine of the reincarnation. My phoongyee friend believed that the golden Buddha came to him from the very friend of Buddha himself, and the Grand Lama.

"You follow me, my friends?" he broke off, at this point.

We nodded.

"Well, one day, when the phoongyee had long been a priest, and was still languishing in the monastery of the Grand Lama, an Englishman came and stole his golden Buddha. The phoongyee cursed him by Buddha and the Lama, with a curse that is known fortunately to but few of my people. It would damn the possessor to misery and complete forgetfulness, an illness of the mind that would baffle the whole medical world.

"The brute, Mannerly, found this out very quickly to his cost, so he buried the golden Buddha. A year or so later he met the little white girl over there, Miss Brierwood, and loved her as you Englishmen will love always. But there was another, our mutual friend Alwood. It was here that Mannerly wove his plan. He resurrected the golden Buddha, and sent it to his rival, and the curse with it.

"Everything prospered with the English devil. He was to be married to-morrow at the little English church yonder. Ha, ha! And now he is gone from our sight! Ha, ha! My phoongyee friend came here quietly, and his inner spiritual craving led him direct to the spot where his long lost Buddha reposed. He has taken it away with him. He is pleased once more. And ere he went he unweaved the spell of his curse. Our friend Alwood is better. Have I properly explained?"

"Man alive," I cried testily, "it's the uncanniest thing I ever heard!"

Ellman smiled picturesquely. "All things are possible to the phoongyees of my country," he said mysteriously, and left us.

* * * * *

I have written it. Farewell!

H. G. L.

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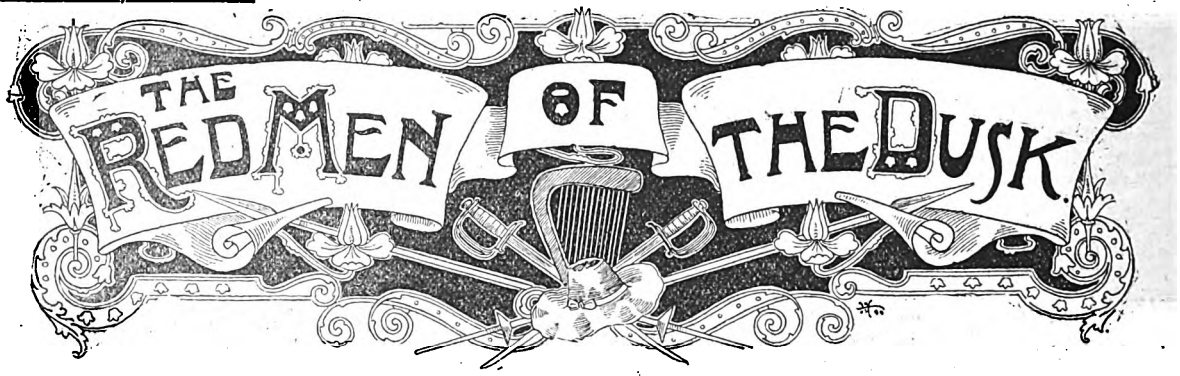
SIXTH INSTALMENT.



A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey. Being mounted on a superior horse the refugee easily shakes off his wretched companions, and at a later period assists two ladies in escaping from a band of thieves. Geoffrey is hospitably entertained by a Welsh farmer, and on resuming this journey he encounters a handsomely dressed Welshman. The latter upbraids the English, and they fight with swords. At a critical moment the duel is stopped by the young girl whom Geoffrey had assisted, and who turns out to be no other than his own cousin. The refugee is welcomed by his uncle, with whom he stops. Geoffrey and his cousins Enid and Owain set out on an errand of mercy and are chased by "The Red Men," who attack the house and are ultimately repulsed. Geoffrey, who goes in pursuit of them, is shot in the head from the house, and suspects his uncle of the deed. Six Red Men are captured and hanged, and Geoffrey incurs the hatred of his uncle's menials by pleading for their lives. The place becomes dangerous to him, and he leaves. Meanwhile, his uncle has extracted from his secret pocket an incriminating letter, with which he sends one of his men to the authorities. The man, however, is captured by Geoffrey and Ieuan Gwyllt.

CHAPTER XV.

I BECOME A MAN OF THE DUSK.

I FOLLOWED in his steps for I could not see what else to do. The whole affair was on my account; the man was, in a sense, my prisoner, and I felt responsible for him. The discovery of the dreadful advantage which Sir Arthur held over my friends had turned my plans topsy-turvy, and I could scarcely ride away to a safe place of refuge with the knowledge that their liberties and lives were hanging in the wind.

"You will follow very carefully," said Ieuan over his shoulder, "for there will be places where to go a foot wrong, will be to slip into a bog where you will sink as a stone sinks in water."

Upon this caution, I came down, and led Whitesock close at the tail of the messenger's horse. At first the path was hard and clean, then we travelled for a long way through places where the frost had not yet gained a complete grip of the marshy track, and, crashing through the stiffened surface, we sank half-knee deep at every step. Being unused to such places my heart was in my mouth time and again, and especially when the surface of the bog for a score of yards round quaked and swayed and seemed to suck at us as if eager to engulf us between its sedgy lips.

But Ieuan trod firmly and steadily on, and I followed and within an hour we came out on the smooth, hard hill side, Ieuan now sprang up behind Gruffydd and took the reins, urging the powerful horse to a trot, and I swung myself into the saddle and rode alongside.

As I came up, the prisoner turned a sullen eye upon me, and I saw fear and surprise mingled in his glance.

"Tell him not to be frightened," said I, "he will not come to any further harm."

Ieuan gave a chuckle of dry contempt and shrugged his shoulders slightly. He spoke never a word, and I was the more strongly fortified in my resolution to see the thing through, and do what I could to keep safe a man who was only an innocent instrument in the mischief intended to me.

Mile after mile we trotted over the bare, bleak hills, and wilder and wilder grew the scene around us. At last Ieuan drew rein at the mouth of a narrow *cwm* whose entrance was littered by great rocks, and began to bark like a fox. He was answered instantly, and two fellows sprang from their hiding-places among the boulders and ran to meet us. At a word from Ieuan, each of them took a rein and guided the horses through a narrow path which wound among the masses of stone and led to a smooth patch of green sward set round on three sides by beetling precipices.

One of these latter lay full in the moonlight, and towards it our horses were led. A dozen yards from the grey rock our guides stood still, and Ieuan made a sign that I should dismount. I did so, and at a command from their leader, the two attendants pulled Gruffydd down in a very unceremonious fashion, and held him by the collar.

"Come this way," said Ieuan.

"What about my mare?" I returned.

"Bring her with you if you like," said Ieuan, and I led Whitesock after him.

I now saw that a huge fragment of rock lay at the base of the cliff, but being of the same colour, and leaving but a narrow gap, it looked even when close at hand a mere projection rather than a separate mass. The path between the boulder and the cliff admitted but a single passenger, and we walked in file, my stirrups jingling against the rock on either hand as Whitesock stepped cautiously after me. A black hole, barely the height of a man, received us, and sand crunched under our feet. A red dancing gleam struck into my eyes, and I saw a great fire of turf burning high and painting the wet, shiny walls of a large cavern with bright, mirror-like reflections. Half-a-dozen figures who had been seated round the blaze sprang to their feet as we entered, but sank down again when they recognised Ieuan.

Low strains of the most mournful music hummed through the place, and I saw the dwarf harper bending over his instrument and drawing from it a wailing, melancholy air.

A woman huddled near him in a crouching heap continued to utter low, heart-broken groans, fitting accompaniment to his music. From two or three bundles laid against the further wall, and covered with skins and tattered rags, cries of pain occasionally burst forth, betraying the presence of the wounded, and I saw myself, at a bound, transferred to the centre and stronghold of the Red Men of the Dusk.

Without a word to anyone, Ieuan walked up to the fire and spread his hands to the warmth. Fierce, curious eyes were turned upon me, and savage cries of rage were uttered as the prisoner was brought forward. His teeth rattled together in fear as he was dragged into the firelight. Ieuan looked upon his terror and their hate with a complacent grin. At this instant the woman, whose groans of sorrow had been echoing through the place, was aroused from her torpor by the excitement of her companions. She looked round and saw the captive, for Gruffydd was now bound hand and foot.

With a scream of wild exultation, she recognised him as a man from Nant-y-Bryn, and at the same moment I knew her for the woman who had begged in vain for the life of her son. She leapt to her feet, drew a knife, and rushed upon her prey, amid the applauding cries of her friends. I sprang forward just in time and caught her uplifted arm.

With swift adroitness, she changed the knife to her other hand, and was about to aim a blow at me, when I moved aside, and the firelight struck full on my face. The knife tinkled at my feet, and she clasped my arms and burst into a flood of speech and tears.

I . . . caught her uplifted arm.

"Old Megan iss asking your pardon," said Ieuan, who had watched everything, with his broad, cruel smile. "She wass not knowing you till she saw your face, and she iss now saying that there iss nothing which could persuade her to do you a mischief."

"And this poor wretch who has been brought here,' said I, "surely you will not put him to death in cold blood?"

"Indeed, I do not care anything either way," said Ieuan, stroking his beard, "yet, to be sure, if they should catch someone again as they did last night, they would not be so quick to hang him, if we had a man to hang, too. We could exchange as they do at the wars."

"And that's a good idea," said I.

"Yes," said Ieuan, with a smile of pleased vanity.

"Indeed, it iss." And from that instant Gruffydd's life was safe.

Food was now offered us, broiled mutton and oatmeal cakes, while a bundle of fodder was brought out for Whitesock.

A heap of dried rushes and ferns was assigned to me for a bed and, folded in my cloak, I slept easily and soundly

Upon my awakening the next morning, I rubbed my eyes and had some difficulty in recollecting where I was. The place looked much the same as on the previous night.

The huge turf fire had been piled up again, and was roaring gaily under a natural vent which led the smoke up to a crack in the hillside above. No daylight ever entered the cavern, but it was lighted night and day by the steady radiance of the ever-glowing peat and wood, of which a great pile was stacked in the driest corner.

The place was empty save for the wounded Red Men of the Dusk, and Megan, who was crouched within a yard of my couch, feeding Whitesock with morsels of oatcake, which the mare chewed slowly, yet with a relish as if appreciating the kindness which was meant.

I sprang up and shook myself, and Whitesock whinnied gaily. Megan stepped quickly forward, took my cloak, and busied herself with picking from it every bit of fern which clung to its surface, patting it and smoothing it and showing me every attention in her power. Then she turned to the fire and the hissing of her cookery was filling the place when Ieuan entered.

"Where is the prisoner?" said I.

"He iss as safe as you are," returned Ieuan, showing his white teeth in a smile. "Did I not say so? But he has been put in one of the other places."

He sat down on a block of wood near the fire and said no other word. Megan gave us the food when it was ready, and we ate it in silence.

For my part, I was busy enough in my thoughts. It was difficult to a degree to decide on my next movements. If I proceeded on my journey I left matters at such loose ends, both as regarded the prisoner in the hands of the Red Men of the Dusk, and my friends in hiding, that I should never have known a peaceful moment. If I went back to Nant-y-Bryn and confronted my uncle, it would only serve to acquaint him that he must lay still deeper and more careful plans to come at his ends. I could see nothing for it but to stand still for the present, and await the march of events.

I was brushing the crumbs of oatcake from my knees, when a smart pit-pat sounded on the floor, and a bare-footed Red Man of the Dusk ran in, his pike trailed in his hand, and his breath coming deeply, as if he had run fast and far.

Ieuan looked up and listened attentively to the man's story, then glanced thoughtfully into the fire.

"Where has this man come from?" said I.

"From Nant-y-Bryn," replied Ieuan.

"Nant-y-Bryn!" I cried.

"Yes," said Ieuan. "That bad old man shall not lift a finger but what I will hear of it, and I keep one or two there watching always."

"But they will be observed," said I.

Ieuan laughed scornfully, and waved his hand without deigning to reply, and I remembered the wild tangle of hills and ravines that rose to the north of the house, holding it in full view, and affording cover for an army.

"What news does he bring?" I asked.

"Owain has ridden away over the hills to the south, and two men with him," answered Ieuan.

"Where has he gone?" said I in wonder.

"I am not sure, but I can guess," retorted Ieuen, and he fell silent, biting the ends of his long moustache. In a short time he left the cave and I saw no more of him for some hours. I spent much of this time rambling about the tiny nook among the mountains where the Gwylliaid Cochion had made their retreat. I mounted a summit near by, and marked how wide and desolate the hills tumbled like stiffened billows all around. Only by the merest chance could their den be hit upon, and then, even when the rocky and carefully-guarded entrance was passed, it would be difficult to believe that the spot was inhabited. Besides the main cavern there were several other holes among the rocks, where the remaining families lived, and so cunningly were the entrances disposed, that it needed but the extinction of the fires to rob the place of all air of human occupancy.

It was towards the middle of the afternoon, and I had resumed my seat by the peats, when Ieuan appeared once more.

"We shall go now," said he, "and wait for Owain to come back again."

CHAPTER XVI.

Ieuan's Story.

I sprang to my feet at once, glad to exchange my present inaction for movement, and in a few minutes we were cantering briskly over the brown, frost-bitten turf. A couple of Ieuan's followers trotted after us, keeping up easily with the mountain pony which carried their tall leader. We held our way southward for several miles, along valleys and through solitary ravines, while the two Red Men of the Dusk ran, one on either flank, along the ridges, and watched the country.

At last we came to slopes dotted with sheep, and Ieuan rode more slowly, and his followers scouted more cautiously still. A tiny hut made of sharpened fir poles, driven into the ground, and wattled with furze, came into sight. I had seen several of them about the hills when riding with Owain, and knew that they served the hardy shepherds for shelter when it was necessary to spend a night upon the mountains.

"We will fasten our horses in this," said Ieuan, "and go a little on foot to see what they are doing."

The hut afforded just sufficient cover from the cutting wind, and I slipped Whitesock's rein round a corner pole, and followed Ieuan, who was marching for a cluster of boulders scattered on the crown of a rise before us. He reached them before me, and placed himself in cover of the tallest. I went up and glanced over his shoulder. Half-a-mile away to the west, the windows of Nant-y-Bryn flashed redly in the light of the sinking sun, figures moved about the front of it, the long, cooing cry of the women who herded the cattle rose faintly up the hillside to us, and the feeling that they were at ease and going peacefully about their usual tasks, came insensibly to the heart.

"We shall go now to those trees," said Ieuan, pointing to a clump of larches some distance to the right. "I must see what people shall come back with Owain."

He moved off as he spoke, and I said: "But what of the animals? Will they be safe there if we leave them?"

"Safe enough," returned Ieuan. "There is but one path which leads near the hut, and no one will be following it. It leads to Fron, and Fron is now empty."

"Fron," thought I, "that is the place where we went on the day of the heavy mist," and I admired the quick chance which had bandied me from the one side to the other.

Below the clump of larches a road passed along the hillside, and right through the midst of the little wood ran a path.

"Where does this path lead to?" I asked.

"To a farm called Tal-fryn up the hill here," returned Ieuan. He caught his breath and his nostrils dilated.

"They are no friends of yours, then?" said I, marking his emotion.

"Who said I was no friend to Winny Tal-fryn?" cried Ieuan, his eyes blazing darkly. "Come, now, who said that? You have heard of Tal-fryn before! Yes, yes, you have been told."

"Never in my life," said I. "I know nothing of the place or the people who live there; I never heard the name till you mentioned it a moment back."

"Then what made you say that?" cried Ieuan.

"You looked angry enough to eat the people," I returned.

"Angry!" said he. "Ay, well, angry. Yes; but not with her. No, indeed, not with her. Poor lass, indeed, I will never blame her." He stopped, and his features worked curiously. His face had the look often seen upon that of a child too proud to weep, yet having a hard struggle to keep tears back. In a few moments he had regained his composure, but remained silent, his eyes fixed on the road.

A sound caught my ears, and I looked up.

"Hist!" said I; "someone is coming through the wood."

The whisper had scarcely left my lips when a young woman, with a child running at her skirts, came round a bend in the path. She was tall and straight, dark-eyed, and fresh-coloured. Ieuan had sprung to my shoulder, and was peering over it. At sight of her, he fell a-trembling until he shook me. I glanced back and saw that his face was drawn hard and white, and set in a pitiful smile.

The young woman came on, and when she was within a yard of the brake in which we lay, Ieuan stepped out and confronted her.

She gave a cry, not, as it seemed to me, of fear, but rather of sorrow and surprise, covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears. The little boy set up a shout of terror, and clung to her, but she took no notice of him, and continued to weep convulsively. Ieuan began to speak rapidly in the softest and most caressing tones of his beautiful voice, but I understood, and wished to understand, nothing of what he said. As the couple approached us, something indefinably familiar in the child's face had riveted my attention, and the sad meeting before my eyes began to make the situation clear enough. Poor Ieuan! Poor Winny! They had been driven apart, that was clear, and I was at a loss to lay my finger upon the person who had driven them.

I turned back deeper into the brake and left the poor souls to themselves, and, in a few minutes, Ieuan came back to his post, tears dropping from his fierce eyes. He made no shame of them, as an Englishman would have done, but began to speak in a low, unsteady voice:

"Yes," said he; "I am sure you can see how it is with us. That is the young woman who was to have been my wife. But that bad old man robbed her away from me, and not honestly, either, and married her to a man who iss not fit to be her servant. Yes, Siencyn was very glad to marry Winny, and got a good farm for a reward. I had gone to England with a drove of ponies to the markets, and wass not back for months and months. And then I came to find her lost to me."

He stopped speaking, and set his face savagely in the direction of Nant-y-Bryn.

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"She will not say that she has seen us," I suggested.

"Not if you should offer her a mountain of gold," cried Ieuan; "not if you should make her a queen on a throne."

"And it was after that, when you shot at Sir Arthur, Ieuan!"

"It wass," he replied. "I had two tries to shoot him, but I am worth nothing in shooting, and missed him by far both times. If it had been the sword between us, now? But he took care about that. He rode with too many for me to try that. And next, what did he do?" cried Ieuan, with heightened colour and blazing eye. "He tried to sell me as a slave. A slave! Yes, I, a free son of the free hills."

"The trick is but too common now-a-days," I replied. "I, myself, have known three gentlemen of birth and fortune trepanned and sold to the plantations. But how did he get hold of you?"

"It wass like this," replied Ieuan Gwyllt. "I wass one day in the market of Aberystwyth, over there by the sea-side, when a man with big golden rings in his ears came to me and asked for news of two or three people who live about this country. I told him what I knew, and wondered why he should ask, for I could see that he wass a sailor and, as I fancied, a complete stranger to us. But he heard what I had to say with much pleasure and took me to a tavern to drink a glass with him. Well, I drank many glasses, for he wass paying for everything, and I thought it wass only his kindness. Indeed, I wass very ignorant then, and never thought there wass such a thing in the world as I wass soon to learn about. 'Well,' said this sailor man, 'I must go. You'll see me down to my boat?'

"'Ay, indeed I will,' I told him, for I thought he wass the finest man in the world. Now I wass feeling pretty well in the house, but when I came to the fresh air I wass just so drunk as possible. The man had a ship lying out in the bay, and a boat was waiting for him in a very quiet bend lying between the river-mouth and the castle. I wass in such a state that it wass quite easy to get me to go out to the ship with them.

"There I had a glass of rum—and, indeed, I remember no more till the next morning, and then we were miles out in the sea. Well, I made a great noise; but the captain he laughed, and said that when it wass time for him to go I wass too drunk to go ashore, so he left me alone. 'But,' said he, 'I am putting into Aberteify this afternoon. You can go ashore there.'

"I wass quite satisfied with that, but I saw no Aberteify that day—indeed, I wass too sick to see anything. The next morning I wass a little better and I asked the captain about Aberteify. Well, he just laughed again, and said he had changed his mind about calling at that place and I must go to Bristol with him now, as that was the place for the ship to stop next, and then I could go where I liked.

"By this time I wass not easy in my mind. But I wass very careful not to look anxious, because that would spoil the chance of getting away. That morning the wind dropped and the ship lay on the water all day without moving. We were not very far from the land, perhaps it wass two miles, perhaps not so much, and the little white cottages on the hills of Sir Benfro, that iss, in your language, Pembrokeshire, looked very pleasant to my eyes. If the captain had wished to set me on the shore he could have done it very easily with the boat, but he never made the offer, and I took care not to ask him, for I wished to look so innocent as possible and willing to go to Bristol or anywhere with them. I knew quite well by now that if I made a noise they would shut me up somewhere, and spoil all my chances. Yet I could not understand what they wanted with me.

"That afternoon, having nothing to do, they got to the liquor, and made themselves very drunk. They offered me some, and I pretended to drink with them and be very merry, but I wass careful to keep my wits. There was a little boy on the ship, and one of the drunken sailors wass beating him and beating him with a piece of rope, just for nothing at all.

"Well, I stopped that, and kept the boy by me where he was safe; and lucky for me I did, for that little boy told me everything. He told me that the ship was going about picking up people here and there, and taking them to Bristol to sell them for slaves. Then they were carried across the sea and set to work in a far country under a burning sun, and were beaten with whips if they dared to grumble. Is that all true?"

"Perfectly true, Ieuan," said I. "True as gospel."

"And what else did the little boy tell me?" cried Ieuan, grinding his teeth furiously. "This, this is what he told me: that he had heard the captain say to the mate that he was to have twelve pounds from someone he called Sir Arthur, besides the price of me in Bristol. Is that clear to you?"

"Clear enough," said I. "The things hangs together as straight as a string."

"Well, I should think so," snorted Ieuan. "I think that, indeed."

"How did you come clear?" I asked.

"Oh, my heart was on fire," cried Ieuan, "when I heard such things. The sky was red instead of blue before me but I kept very quiet, and waited for the darkness.

"I could swim well, and the sea was so smooth as a pool. Well, when it was dark, I crept to the end of the ship where no one was and took off my clothes, and slipped down a rope that was hanging in the water, and so got into the sea without a sound, though, indeed, they were too drunk in the ship to trouble much about a noise if I had made it.

"There was a light in a house on a hill, shining like a pretty star, and guiding me straight to the shore.

"I was a long, long time getting there, for I am a slow swimmer, though I can swim far; but at last I put my feet down, and felt the sand. Ah, how I ran that night!

"The stones cut my feet, and the bushes tore my naked body, but I ran and ran, wishing for nothing but to leave the sea and the ship far behind me.

"The next morning I found myself close to a little farm, and I went there to beg for food. At first the people were frightened and thought I was a madman. But they were very good people, and sorry for me when they heard all my story, and they gave me food and some clothes. And now I was safe, and made my way back easily over the hills."

"A very lucky end to your story, Ieuan," said I, "there are many and many a one working this day in the plantations, trepanned and decoyed as you were."

"And shall I let the man escape who did all this to me?" cried Ieuan Gwyelt. "No, no," and he poured forth a fierce torrent of words in his own tongue, in which he could express his feelings more easily.

His outburst was deep rather than loud, and was dying away in savage mutterings, when I laid my hand on his arm, "Horses, and many of them," said I.

A confused trampling had come to my ears, and we listened intently. A rider appeared round a corner of the hill, and another, and another. The first four were Owain and three gaily-dressed young men about his own age. Then followed a dozen mounted and well-armed fellows.

Some trotting, some cantering, spurs and harness jingling gaily, swords rattling, talking and laughing, they rode past us down the slope, heading for Nant-y-Bryn.

"Fifteen," said Ieuan softly, when the last horseman had ridden by, "and that is twelve come to help."

"From where, and for what?" I asked.

"From a man who is a savage enemy to us," replied Ieuan; "Sir Lewis Mervyn, of Aberafon. He is living about twenty-five miles away over the hills, and he has sent his two sons and his nephew and ten men at once."

Ieuan turned and strode back rapidly towards the little hut and our horses, and I followed, seeing my dilemma thickening and thickening around me.

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"And root out this ancient mischief." Owain's words came to my mind, and I perceived why he was returning in such force. He had been to obtain aid from another magnate whose lands had been harassed by the Red Men of the Dusk, and now the latter were to be pursued with fire and sword, and an end made of their troublesome presence.

And what was I to do? Run away from people who had rendered me a signal service, or stand by them and fight like a rat in a hole against my love's brother, and my friend? It was a Gordian knot which I am thankful that events cut for me, as you shall hear.

CHAPTER XVII.

ENTANGLEMENTS.

THE two men who had followed us from the mountain fastness of the Gwylliard Cochion were no longer with us. They had received orders from Ieuan to hold the place under surveillance from different points, and had gone to their posts. We were passing the hill top boulders on our return to the hut when a sound of voices came on the wind. We slipped in among the huge stones, and looked out for the speakers.

The sun was now below the hills, but the cloudless evening sky was filled with a clear, frosty light of palest saffron. Over a near ridge came a small party, riding on ponies. They cantered rapidly down the valley, and Ieuan began to whistle softly through his teeth. I understood his fear, and hoped with all my heart that the horses in the hut would keep quiet. But, no. As the newcomers drew near, Ieuan's steed neighed shrilly. A man sprang down, and ran into the place. We heard from the distance his loud cry of surprise and, within the instant, he was out again, leading Whitesock.

I remained in ambush no longer. Tucking my sword under my arm, I ran, as fast as my heavy riding boots would allow me, down the slope.

He shot from the saddle like a stone from a catapult.

Loud cries burst from the riders, and among them I heard the mare's name called aloud twice in a shrill, female voice. They were on a smooth stretch before me, and I had them clear against the sky down to their horses' fetlocks. I saw the man who had seized Whitesock leap into the saddle and urge her forward, and I saw the swift end she made of his attempt to carry her off. Snorting with rage, she bounded to and fro, swinging her luckless rider right and left, springing high from the ground, and, with four heels gathered in a bunch and her back arched like a bow, she did her utmost to unseat him.

But, for a while, he clung to the saddle, for these mountain people ride almost before they walk. Then she put down her head and darted forward at an incredible speed. I was now not far away, and heard her unhappy captor's loud laugh as he felt her shoot steadily away, and thought that he had mastered her.

Pausing, I collected all my breath and gave the whistle Whitesock knew.

She slewed round instantly and flew towards me. Confused shouts arose from the party, and I heard the cry of 'Ieuan Gwyelt" and the "Gwylliard Cochion," and as Whitesock came swiftly on, the bunch of riders scoured away over the hill towards Nant-y-Bryn.

As they went, I caught for an instant the flutter of female garments, but it was a mere glimpse, and my attention was at once drawn to the play nearer at hand. The rider was struggling furiously, but to no effect, for the mare had the bit between her teeth, and there was no holding her. Suddenly she stopped dead just as he reached to a shorter grip of the reins. He must have eased the clutch of his knees in doing so, for, at that full pause, he shot from the saddle like a stone from a catapult. Turning twice in the air, he fell, at a moment when his body was as straight as a bar, square across a hog-backed boulder near at hand.

There was a sharp crack as of a breaking stick, and his head struck the rock with a heavy thud. He gave one cry and threw out his hands, then neither spoke nor stirred again, but hung as limp as a scarf, his heels dangling on the one side and his head on the other.

I stood for an instant on guard, but, seeing no signs of his companions coming to his aid or to attack me, I ran to his side. I drew him down from the boulder and laid him on the grass, but a glance sufficed to show that no aid could avail him. He was quite dead. The knife-edged rock had broken his back as a man snaps a rotten twig, and he had paid his life as the price of that short, fierce ride. I knew him at once. It was the man who had smitten Whitesock across the face with the bucket.

A pony came galloping at top speed, and I sprang to arms, but dropped my sword-point instantly. It was Ieuan, and laughing as he rode.

"Well," said he, "and did you catch him? I frightened those others who were with him and made them run away. His horse was running loose, and so I caught it and came back on it. There is a pair of pistols in the holsters, so I am in good luck, for we have but few of such things."

I related the manner in which the unfortunate fellow had come to his end, and Ieuan bared his white teeth in a gratified smile.

"One less," said he. "That is something, though they are now so strong that one does not make much difference."

"Were there not women in the party?" I asked.

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"Yes, indeed," said Ieuan, "the sister of Owain it was, and Siani, her woman, and two or three men marching with them to guard them."

The sister of Owain! Enid had fled before me. She had see Whitesock, and heard my whistle. Siani had cried out the mare's name. Ieuan had executed some movement which had caused them to fear an ambush of the Red Men of the Dusk. What would she, what could she think of me? I, in league with the Gwylliard Cochion, and, apparently, lying in wait to entrap stragglers from Nant-y-Bryn. I moved about restlessly, and my eyes fell upon the dead man. Here was a fresh and dreadful tangle. He is carried back by Whitesock to my whistle, and is found dead the next day at the same spot. And a man known to be on ill terms with me. I gritted my teeth together in perplexity. The face of the prostrate figure was turned away from us.

"Who is he?" asked Ieuan.

"I have seen him at Nant-y-Bryn, but I do not know his name," I answered.

Ieuan walked forward, caught a lock of hair dangling over the forehead, and turned up the face, lifting the head. He dropped it as if the touch had burnt him, and sprang back with the wild cry of a surprise beyond words.

"Who is it?" I cried in turn.

Ienan turned on me a face in which shone great eyes of wonder and fierce joy.

"Siencyn Tal-fryn," he replied slowly.

"The husband of Winny?"

"Yes."

He fetched out his pony from the hut without another word, and we rode some distance in silence. When we began speaking again it was with reference to the band which Owain had led down the hill to Nant-y-Bryn.

"It is easy to see what they have come for," said Ieuan, nodding his head gloomily. "There are but few of the Gwylliard Cochion left, and, indeed, there will be an end to them very soon."

This did not seem to me altogether a pure evil, but I refrained from saying so.

"How long has your sect flourished?" I asked.

"From old times," replied Ieuan proudly. "It is now about a hundred years since they were at their full strength. They were lords of the mountains many miles to the north of here, and no one dared to say them nay. But Baron Owen came down upon them suddenly with an army and took them by surprise, and slew a hundred or more. Many a time have I heard the story, when I was a child, from a very old man whose mother carried him far over the hills on her back that night."

"And since then they have never been so formidable?" said I.

"Never," said Ieuan. "Small bands of them have held their own in the depths of the hills—hills which they know as a man knows his house, but the numbers have grown less and less, and now——" He stopped and sighed as sadly as if the Gwylliard Cochion were a blameless and persecuted remnant. He remained silent for a while, then burst out in an inconsequent fashion, as if uttering his thoughts aloud:

"And yet I should not like her to think I killed her husband."

"To be sure not," I replied, perceiving that he spoke of the man of Tal-fryn. "It was an accident which might happen to anyone. To be flung from a horse and killed is a common misfortune."

"If I could have it made plain to her," said Ieuan dubiously, "things, perhaps, would come better yet."

"There is nothing more likely," I returned. "And, for myself, I should be glad to tell Owain the truth of the matter."

"Yes," said Ieuan, laughing aloud. "Things are looking rather strange with you, too."

"They are," I returned, and again we rode for some time in silence, each busy with his own thoughts.

"Ieuan," said I, "what were you going to do with Miss Vaughan and Siani that first night I came across you?"

"When you took them back, eh?" replied Ieuan. "But there wass no harm meant for them. No, indeed!" he cried, slapping his thigh, "no harm at all, indeed. But I would have used Miss Vaughan to draw her brother from that bad old man. I would have sent to Owain a word that his sister was safe and well among us, and only waiting for him to come away from Nant-y-Bryn, and promise to stop away, and then he should have her again. That wass the plan that came to my mind when I heard that she wass on the road."

"What made you so anxious to detach Owain from the garrison?" I asked.

"Indeed, I am fond of him," replied Ieuan simply. "I would fight twice as gladly against Nant-y-Bryn if Owain was not there. I taught him to ride and to play with the sword, and I went with his father to the wars when I wass a tall lad myself."

This was the outcome of my thoughts during the previous silence; Ieuan now turned to his.

"They are telling me," he said, "that you are very rich."

"Who are telling you?"

"Well, no one now, of course, but I have heard many times of Butley Croft, and the rich English people living there named Heathcote."

I laughed, for, of a surety, my riches were swiftly taking wings to themselves by this time, and deserting me as an obstinate malignant.

"The rents, now," insinuated Ieuan gently, "the rents in a rich country like that will come to much money in a year."

I smiled, and humoured him.

"Last year," I replied, "they ran to something over sixteen hundred pounds."

"Ah!" cried Ieuan in a deep, rich tone of admiration. "In one year, one little year. And how does it feel to be so rich as that?"

"'How did it feel?'" thought I, "would be a more correct phrase," but I said nothing.

"From all that money," said Ieuan reflectively, "a one hundred pounds would hardly be missed."

"And what would you do with the hundred pounds when you got it, Ieuan?" I asked.

"I!" he laughed, and threw his hand out gaily. "I would stock a little farm."

"What!" said I. "And leave the Red Men of the Dusk?"

"Yes, indeed," said he, "when I have done what I want with them."

"And where is the little farm?" I asked.

"Oh, that is just a fancy," said Ieuan cautiously. "It is only what I have been thinking. I shall not stop with them all my life."

He lapsed into silence and I said no more until we reached our destination.

That night the Red Men of the Dusk sat long in council around the huge fire of peats in the cavern. I was none the wiser for the husky, growling whispers in which they deliberated, but Ieuan told me in two words, when his lean, wolfish friends had returned each to his own hole in the rocks, that they had resolved to shift their quarters before the threatened onslaught was delivered. As for myself, my mind was made up. I would ride over to the neighbourhood of Nant-y-Bryn and see whether luck would send Owain in my way. I could not rest until I had put myself something in the right as regarded the events of the twilight.

(To be continued.)

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

VI.—LET-DOWN FOR THE "MISSUS."

OLD Man Jacobs's wife was a woman of administrative ability. Consequently when Jacobs decided that the period had arrived for a night in town, he left the homestead in Nan's charge without compunction. There was only one trouble likely to arise, he said. If Black Pete stole any more chickens it was no use protesting any longer. He would have to be pursued and punished, and he felt badly about being away with that prospect in prominence.

Nan, who never minced matters with her better half, flashed out with the assertion that he was a coward—declared he was going away because he was afraid of Black Pete. Not that it mattered, said Nan. On the contrary he could not do a wiser thing than make himself scarce when there was anything to be done which wanted more than a child's intelligence. She would fix Black Pete, said Nan. She didn't want any fool-man's help for that.

So Old Man Jacobs departed. He chuckled to himself as he shambled through the front garden gate. When Nan called after him to know what he was laughing at, he said nothing. As a matter of fact he was wondering about Black Pete, because there was a lurking suspicion in his head that the nigger would rather reform than go chicken-stealing that night if he knew about Nan.

Black Pete, however, was laying his plans in all innocence. He spent the day as usual loofing about on the sea-shore between drinks. About six o'clock, when dusk was beginning to fall, he retired to the small cabin he inhabited, shook out a couple of sacks, fastened them with a bit of string under his coat, and set out for a stroll.

Chance led him in the direction of the Jacobs' ranch, and his attention was attracted by a queer sound in the neighbourhood of the hen coop. It was a sound of feathered turbulence suggesting that there was one chicken too many for the perch, so that each time the odd chicken on the floor made a dash for the pole one at the other end was bumped off.

Black Pete knew that Old Man Jacobs was away, and in his absence it would only be courteous of him to go in and settle the difficulty either by enlarging the roost or by removing one of the chickens. The latter seemed to be the more simple plan, especially as he had a sack with him at the time, and taking care not to alarm Mrs Jacobs by making a needless disturbance, he approached the chicken-house, and by quietly removing one of the boards at the back, which someone had apparently loosened for this purpose, he managed to secure one of the roistering chickens by the slack of its neck in such a manner that it yielded voicelessly to his persuasive touch and disappeared from the roost so silently that not one of its fellows noticed the incident. They noticed merely that there was, of a sudden, accommodation for twenty chickens on a bar that had only seemed roomy enough for nineteen.

Having inserted his prize in one of the bags that he carried, Black Pete would have returned peacefully home to his supper, had he not on rounding the corner of the chicken-house run into the arms of Nan.

Any other woman might have been startled at suddenly finding herself precipitated into the arms of a herculean nigger. It is certain that all other women would have been suspicious at encountering this notorious thief in the neighbourhood of her chicken roost; but Nan merely remarked that it was a pleasant evening, and that it was mighty nice of Pete to come round to pay her a visit knowing her husband was away.

She said she had been feeling a bit nervous and lonely, and if Pete would care to step inside why she had just taken a nice piece of rabbit off the stove, and not being quite herself that night she had opened a bottle of whisky that Old Man Jacobs had brought back last time he went to town.

For some years Pete had entertained a secret admiration for the mature but buxom figure of Missus Jacobs. The smile which she bestowed upon him as an accompaniment to the invitation loosened all his ideas on the immorality of making love to another man's wife in the absence of her husband.

Something fluttered under his coat. It may have been that for a moment he mistook it for the fluttering of his own heart, for he yielded to the temptation. Remembering himself in time, however, he said he would go home first and change his coat. Nan would not hear of it. Pete insisted. Nan said the rabbit would be getting cold, and she wouldn't be surprised if someone else might drop in while he was absent, and a bottle of whisky wouldn't go far between three.

Black Pete followed his charming hostess inside the

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shanty. At the sight of the nicely spread table he felt abashed; but Nan, with rare tact, made him feel at home. It was hot in the kitchen, she said; he might take off his coat and hang it upon the nail behind the door. Black Pete didn't find it hot; he always preferred to keep his coat on in the presence of ladies.

Old Man Jacobs' wife asked whether she was running the place or whether Black Pete was. Thus admonished Pete retired towards the door, took off his coat, and, opening the door, stepped out with the apparent intention of expectorating. This not being contrary to etiquette in that part of the world the incident might have passed unnoticed if Nan, with a true woman's curiosity, had not wondered what was in the sack that Pete was dumping in the front porch. Pete smiled unhealthily. Nan wouldn't be surprised if it was a secret. Pete allowed that it was a secret.

Nan took a long breath; but knowing quite well what was in the bag, having been present when it was put in, she did not press the subject.

Pushing the bottle of whisky towards Pete (the latter with considerable breeding making no comment on the absence of glasses on the table) Nan excused herself gracefully, because she noticed that there was no water in the house, and she would just run round to the shed and get some.

The out-house in question was a square wooden hut strongly made and with an excellent padlock on the door. Nan opened it with a key that she carried in her pocket, and filled her jug from a pail of water that was standing on an immense block of ice, one of the luxuries that she permitted the carrier to bring out to her once a week from the town.

Black Pete replaced the bottle on the table as she entered. It seemed unaccountable to him that he should have lived so long in the neighbourhood without getting on terms of social intercourse with Mrs. Jacobs. He felt ashamed because he had listened to stories about her which had led him to believe that whatever her abilities she had no virtues, that she was a quick-tongued, ready-fisted woman, who succeeded in making her husband's life a terror to him.

It was common gossip that Mrs. Jacobs was master in her own house, that she insisted on having things her own way, and gave everyone to understand that she was the only woman with an idea in her head that side of the Selkirk mountains.

This was all nonsense, according to Pete.

Between them they made the rabbit look foolish, and the bottle of whisky grew lighter each time that it passed round. Pete's yellow eyes were beginning to roll in his head. He brought his chair nearer to Mrs. Jacobs, and that lady not seeming to object, he playfully laid one of his hands upon hers.

What a nice man he was to be sure! And Mrs. Jacobs had heard such dreadful stories about Black Pete stealing her neighbours' poultry. They both laughed, and in pure good feeling Black Pete endeavoured to capture Nan's other hand, but failed. Besides, if a man like Black Pete wanted to steal chickens, why he could. No one would dare say a word to him. He drew up the sleeve of his shirt and doubled his big arm admiringly. Then he tapped the hip pocket of his trousers. People might think he stole chickens, but they didn't say so to his face. He made another grab for Nan's disengaged hand, and failed still more clumsily, almost banging his head on the table.

Nan put one hand affectionately on the back of his

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curly pate, and this time his head banged against the corner of the table in a way that made the knives and forks rattle. He fell like a log on to the floor. Nan waited a moment to make sure that the whisky had done its work, and then she proceeded to the door and opened it wide.

Returning, she grasped Black Pete by the hair and dragged him unceremoniously out of the house and across the back yard. Her strength would have surprised her admirer had he been in a state to appreciate what she was accomplishing single-handed.

Strong woman though she was, it required all her strength to drag the prostrate giant into the out-house. Her first idea had been to lock him in there, where he would, no doubt, cool off by the time Old Man Jacobs returned. The notion of his cooling off put a new idea into her head, however.

The chief objection that Old Man Jacobs had to his wife was that she continually had ideas. He said that a woman with ideas was as big a fool as a man without them. Nan remembered this against him, and having now a really brilliant idea she determined to put it into execution, and to hold it over the old man when he should see fit to shamble back again to his domestic hearth.

Foraging in a cupboard she produced a piece of strong cord. Then removing the pail from the block of ice she grasped Black Pete under the arm pits, and hoisted him upon it, securing him with four or five mightily fine loops and knots. She stood for a moment regarding her handiwork with a pleased expression.

"He'll cool off, and learn not to come chicken stealing and taking my hands in his," she reflected. "Old Man don't think much of my ideas gen'rilly, but if this doesn't beat all creation." She was stopped in her laughter by noticing first one and then the other of Black Pete's eyes opening. "Seems to have been having bad dreams," thought Nan.

The most frightful terror was depicted on his hideous countenance, and as he gradually realised the fact that it was real cold he was sitting on and not part of a nightmare in which an Arctic hades had been provided for the reformation of his darkened soul, he emitted a yell that went very near to lifting the roof off the four corners of the out-house. The yell ended in a hurricane of profanity that he might have picked up during the course of his nightmare. But though he yelled and swore and strained his big muscular frame, not an inch could he move hand or foot.

"It ain't a particle of use for yer to break them strings," said Nan consolingly; "yer froze to it."

"Let me up!" yelled Pete.

"Not I. Yer'll stop right there. And no telling but what Old Man Jacobs will happen around later on with a gun and want to know what I'm doing with a bloomin' stalagmite histing itself in the out-house."

The big eyes rolled with terror.

Nan retired for a moment, and returned with the neglected sack, which she proceeded to open by the light of the lantern that hung in a corner of the room.

"Why, bless my heart if it ain't a chicken," she exclaimed derisively. "Maybe it should be put on ice."

An odd piece of string was lying on the ground, and, making a loop in this, she proceeded with the dexterity of a good housewife to hang the chicken round Black Pete's neck.

"Old Man would never hev thought out that," she said, regarding this masterpiece of ingenuity with a smile of great satisfaction. "Well, good-night, Mr. Pete. I'll leave the door ajar, and ef yer want anything maybe yer'll call."

She took the precaution to feel his bonds, and being satisfied that they were irreproachably secure, and that, as she had hinted, the back of his clothes were frozen hard on to the ice-block, she shook her fist in his face and retired.

Old Man Jacobs returned by the early train, and about five o'clock shuffled into his wife's room wearing a sheepish expression which he was unable to avoid after one of his periodical escapes from his wife's dominion. Instead of welcoming with her usual charge of satire, however, she received him with some show of friendliness. Encouraged by this the old man feebly attempted to work in a cut of his own.

"Did yer lose any chicken last night, dearie?" he inquired, looking at her from the corner of a watery eye.

"Not one," she answered gloryingly. "Yer give me a woman that's got a modicum of wits agin a whole army of men that ain't any better than yer."

The old man subsided into his chair abashed. Nan in the meanwhile had risen and dressed.

"Git out of that and come with me," she said commandingly.

"Where to, missus?" asked the old man, who did not feel much energy after his night's dissipation.

"There's Black Pete out in the shed. Oh, yer needn't be afraid," she added contemptuously, "he's tied."

"Tied!" echoed the old man, rubbing his eyes. "Who helped yer?"

"Ain't I got ideas of my own," she asked sharply. "Git along."

Obedient as ever to the behests of his wife, Old Man Jacobs shuffled amiably in front of her.

"Maybe we'll hev that chicken that Black Pete named for lunch to-day," she said considerately.

Arrived at the out-house the door was still ajar, as it had been when she left it the previous night. Nan felt herself bursting with pride as she hastened the somewhat timid steps of her better half by a vigorous shove.

"Look inside," she said delightedly.

Old Man Jacobs did not much relish an encounter with Black Pete, but not seeing any way out of it he opened the door gingerly and thrust his head in.

"Well," said Nan impatiently. She pushed him aside. In the further corner of the room was a big pool of water, and lying in it dank and brown a coiled and knotted piece of rope.

"Where's Black Pete?" inquired Old Man Jacobs with natural curiosity.

"Gone, you fool," snapped his better half. "The ice had melted down, you see. Anyone else 'ud be ashamed to come home to a wife so drunk that he couldn't see that."

"Anyhow we've got the chicken," said the old man in his most conciliatory tone. "Where's the chicken?"

"Well, if you ain't——" shouted Mrs. Jacobs, words absolutely failing her in the extremity of her wrath. "Where d'ye think the chicken would be now seeing that it was tied round his neck. Where?"

"Yer ain't fit to be left in charge of the homestead," said Old Man Jacobs with a sudden flash of contempt. "It'll be a long time afore I leave the place again—you and your ideas."

"That's it," cried Nan, "you're always the same with your repenting the mornin' after. Why don't you get a broom and wipe up that mess in the outhouse instead of standing there talking."

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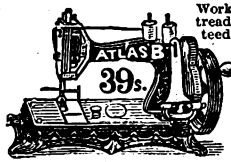

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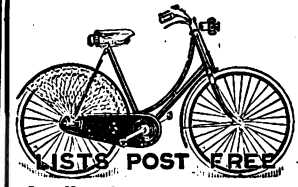

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AIDS TO ACCURACY.

C. G.—It is impossible to lay down exact rules for everybody. Some people live to be centenarians, apparently, in spite of their habits. One old man of ninety-seven all his life drank quantities of neat gin, and smoked the strongest, rankest tobacco; while the Rev. W. Davis, who died in 1790 at 105, and who ought to have known better, for the last thirty-five years of his life never took exercise, began the day on hot buttered rolls, and ended it with a supper of hot roast meat with plenty of wine.

P. T.—The cost of St. Peter's, Rome, was over £14,000,000.

E. J. L.—It is estimated that in Paris one in eighteen of the population live on charity, with a tendency towards crime; in London this class is one in thirty.

Rosy.—Vast quantities of flowers are gathered for perfumery purposes. Each year it is estimated that 1,860 tons of orange flowers are used, besides 930 tons of roses, 150 tons each of violets and jasmines, 75 tons of tuberoses, 30 tons of cassia, and 15 tons of jonquils.

Celt.—Over 10,000 Irish people settle in England every year.

U. S.—In the time of Columbus, before the memorable voyage of discovery, the scientists asserted that if a ship should reach India, sailing due west, she could never get back again, because the rotundity of the earth (the spheroid character of the globe had been previously demonstrated) would present a kind of mountain, up which it would be impossible to sail, even with the most favourable wind.

H.—There are 130,000 Jewish soldiers under the Russian flag.

Ex.—Oh, no! Experts say that the buried city of Pompeii has not yet yielded up half of its artistic treasure; that at the present rate of progress seventy years will elapse before it is thoroughly unearthed.

Wheel.—Rather an uncommon banking arrangement is carried on in the Manawatu district of New Zealand. It may be described as a kind of portable teller's office. On certain days of the week a clerk from one of the Palmerston banks travels up and down the railway line from Palmerston to Otaki, transacting the ordinary business of the bank *en route*. Laden with a sachel containing his supply of cash, and provided with a teller's usual precautions against danger of robbery, he makes the carriage his headquarters, and there receives visits from customers at the way stations, changing cheques or taking deposits, as occasion may require.

Owner.—The Duke of Northumberland is the greatest landowner in England. He owns over 200,000 acres. His land reaches from sea to sea, in the north of England, and he can ride a hundred miles from his feudal castle without going off his own demesne.

Forest.—One third of the land surface of the earth is covered with forests.

F.—A shoal of herrings is supposed to consist in numbers from 800,000 to 1,000,000.

Bawbee.—Half-farthings were coined in 1843, but were speedily removed from circulation.

W. J. B.—The manufacture of cigarettes in France began in 1843, and at first the factory at Gros Caillou was able to supply the demand. Now there are several factories at work, employing 2,000 women, who turn out 400,000,000 cigarettes every year.

Law.—A Hindoo jury consists of five persons.

S. H.—What is called tortoise-shell is not the bony covering or shield of the turtle, but only the scales which cover it. These are thirteen in number, eight of them flat and five a little curved. A large turtle affords about eight pounds of them, the plates varying from an eight to a quarter of an inch in thickness. The fishers do not kill the turtles; did they do so they would in a few years exterminate them. When a turtle is caught they fasten him and cover his back with dry leaves or grass, to which they set fire. The heat causes the plates to separate at their joints; a large knife is then carefully inserted horizontally beneath them, and the scales lifted from the back.

Wales.—Nearly one million people still speak Welsh.

C. T.—The Lord Chancellor receives the good round sum of £500 for proroguing Parliament, and the same sum for the opening of the Houses "by Commission."

Rail.—The railways of the world are worth six thousand million pounds.

Mex.—You are mistaken. The Mexicans are an exceedingly polite people. Should one lady express her admiration for another's baby, the mother replies, "It is entirely at your disposal." When two ladies meet, they lift their right hand, gently tap each other on the left shoulder, and then shake hands very heartily. If they are intimate friends, after going through the foregoing ceremony, they also kiss, not with the lips, but by laying the cheeks softly together.

W. D.—Only about one out of every 1,000 married couples live to celebrate their golden wedding.

Legal.—Under old European law the crew and passengers of wrecked vessels could be imprisoned and enslaved, their property reverting to the lord of the coast or to the Crown.

W. E. T.—The annual rainfall in the West of England is normally forty-seven inches; in the East twenty-seven inches.

Gun.—Krupp guns cost £170 per ton.

Grimace.—In England, as we know, placing the thumb to the nose and extending the fingers is the sign of derision; but among certain hill tribes in India it is the most expressive manner of showing respect.

Smith.—There are nearly 400 blacksmiths in England.

M. B.—A recent survey established the number of glaciers in the Alps at 1,155, of which 249 have a length of more than four and three-quarter miles; the French Alps contain 144 glaciers, those of Italy seventy-eight, Switzerland, 471, and Austria 462.

F. H.—The Freihaus, in a suburb of Vienna, is one of the most spacious buildings on the globe. Within its walls a whole city of human beings live and work, eat and sleep. It contains in all about 1,500 rooms, divided into upwards of 400 dwelling apartments, of from four to six rooms each. This immense house has thirteen courtyards, five open and eight covered, and a large garden within its walls.

Dorothy.—Before definitely deciding about your new summer dress it would be as well if you were to see the new patented material, "Iroganil Glystre." It is entirely different from anything previously seen, and is incredibly effective at the price of 1s. 11½d. upwards, double width. Your draper should have thirty varieties; if not, write Manufacturers, Iroganil Glystre, Bradford, for address.

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INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.

It is the fellow who stands inside the house and looks out through the window that most enjoys the storm. How jolly to see the passers-by struggling against the wind or scudding before it, their coat collars up to their ears, their hats jammed down on their heads, slapping and slashing over the flooded pavements, soaked to the skin, maybe, cursing the weather with what breath they may have left, as they pelt and writhe along the road. Great fun, I say, this is for the man who looks out through the window. Not his are the wet clothes "clinging like cerements," as poor Tom Hood said about the girl who had ended her sorrows, as so many do, in the Thames. Not his the able-bodied chance of catching a bad cold and getting floored with rheumatism or pneumonia. Oh, no; he is on the right side of the brick wall, snug as a bug in a rug, and dry as a bone. So he just fills himself full up with what is probably one of the meanest forms of delight, the enjoyment of witnessing the miseries of others. You may not believe it, but I know people who take a distinct and positive pleasure in attending funerals for the sake of looking upon the grief of the afflicted and hugging the idea that it is somebody else and not they themselves who is being macerated and ground up in the merciless mill of sorrow.

On the same lines we may regard strong, healthy persons; they who have been hearty as pigs all their lives; they who eat like hungry horses and sleep like policemen off duty; who have scarce ever had a pang or a pain, and fancy that illness in others is a culpable weakness, if not an absolute sin. I have a notion to add that chronically well people are the coldest blooded wretches on earth. There! I *have* said it, and it's true.

"For over ten years," says the writer, "I had suffered from indigestion and weakness. I felt weak, low, and heavy. I had no appetite, and when I sat down to the table, often I could not touch a morsel of food. After meals I had excruciating pain at the chest, through to the back; also a gnawing constant pain under the shoulder blade. I had frequent bilious attacks, being so sick that I could not lift my head from the pillow.

"At night I was restless, getting no proper sleep, and in the morning feeling worse tired than when I went to bed. I was much swoollen about the waist, and was constantly belching wind. I got gradually weaker and weaker, it being a misery to get about. I continued like this for ten years, never being well, and not knowing what it was to enjoy my meals. I saw doctor after doctor (I am sure that I consulted twenty doctors), who gave me medicines, but I received no benefit from them. They did not suit my case.

"I gave up all hope of ever getting well again, and wished that I was dead, always fretting at my weak state. In April of last year (1896) a pamphlet was sent me by post, and I read about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. My symptoms were accurately described in this small book, and I determined to try it.

"I sent to Mr. Coppin's Stores, Marsham Street, Westminster, for a bottle of this medicine. After taking it a few days I found it was doing me good. I could eat and enjoy my food, which agreed with me. This gave me confidence, and I continued with it, and soon all the pain left me, and I felt as strong and well as ever I did in my life. I felt brighter, and could eat anything, nothing coming amiss. I have since kept in good health, taking an occasional dose when required. You can make what use you like of this statement, and refer anyone to me. (Signed) (Mrs.) Annie White, 117 High Road, New Southgate, London, N., August 10th, 1897."

This lady is the wife of Mr. H. White, butcher, New Southgate. In private conversation they both speak very enthusiastically of Mother Seigel's Syrup. Mrs. White says that although during her long illness she could scarcely walk at all, she can now walk six miles without fatigue. And that is not half a bad tramp, even for a woman who has never been ill. Many of them cannot do as much. That our correspondent *can* is a striking illustration of the power of the medicine that cured her. I who write these lines have not always had the luck to be looking out of the window at other people fighting the bad weather. I have been bowed down under the tempest of sickness and pain myself. And so have millions. And it is *we* who sympathise with Mrs. White and rejoice with her on her recovery.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 541. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 13TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

WHEN A WOMAN

AND A MOUSE MEET,

which is the more frightened, the woman or the mouse? This was a subject proposed for a Debating Society. History does not record what the result was, whether the members in their wisdom settled this most important question. We are sure the mouse would be frightened beyond words to tell, and we have ourselves seen a lady mount a chair, and shriek for fear of a mouse more frightened than she. There is another question that can be more easily answered; when a person suffers from Indigestion, Wind on the Stomach, Biliousness, Liver Complaints, Spasms, Sick Headache, Costiveness, etc., what is the best remedy? In chorus all reply, why, Page Woodcock's Wind Pills!

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"There is no 'If.'"

When Tom Whitehead was advised by his doctor to go to a hydro at Harrogate and take the waters, he was very fractious about it.

He had been ill for six weeks, and now he was convalescent he seemed to consider it a personal injury on someone's part that he could not go back to his office at once.

Far from doing so, he was told he must go away for another four or five weeks, if he wanted to be thoroughly strong and well again.

"I hate hydros," he remarked testily at the doctor's suggestion. "If I must go, why can't I go to a hotel?"

"You can if you like, but if, as you say, you are obliged to go alone, you will be much better at a hydro. You will get more attention and more company."

"Hydros are always crowded with uninteresting people who fuss you about," he grumbled.

"Not at this time of the year. They never get full until Easter, and you can just get four weeks in nicely. After that you may finish off with a week at the sea."

"What on earth is to happen at the office?" he asked frowning.

"The office will not suffer nearly as much in the long run, as it will if you do anything rash now."

"Am I to take the waters?"

"Yes, and the baths. They will do you more good than anything. If you take my advice, you go to the Harrogate Hydro on Thursday. It is the nearest to the pump room and very comfortable."

So with an unwilling grace, Tom gave in, and the following Thursday he was half lifted from a cab, and helped up the steps by two men into the large hall of the Harrogate Hydro.

They placed him in a chair, and he looked round grimly enough.

Then the manageress came forward, with a kindly, sympathetic manner, and asked him if he would like a cup of tea in his room, or at once, before he went upstairs.

He said he would have it upstairs, and waited impatiently while the lift was rung down, and his luggage brought in.

Three or four ladies were passing through the hall. Two were of the middle-aged, motherly type, and they looked at him pityingly as he sat huddled up in a fur coat and rugs. It annoyed him considerably, for of all things, and in flat contradiction to the characteristics of his sex, Tom hated to be pitied. He was horribly afraid they would come and speak to him, so he almost glared at them as they passed.

The third was a merry-faced girl, with a rough head of curly brown hair, and two laughing brown eyes. She looked about seventeen, and when she discovered the newcomer she regarded him with undisguised curiosity. She had come to look for letters, and after searching the pigeon holes, remarked to a young assistant manageress standing near:

"No luck at all to-day. No letters, no golf, and no billiards. Awful Tommy Rot, isn't it?"

She wore a cycling skirt, and as she spoke she stood with her hands tucked in the two front pockets, balancing herself on her heels.

"I played 'Dot-and-Carry-One' last night, as there was nothing better procurable," she went on. "You know, the man with the squint. He's a bit balmy on the top-knot."

Her companion laughed, for in spite of her unorthodox way of expressing herself, there was something undeniably attractive about her, and she had a charming voice.

Tom grew still more scowling, however, and stared at his boots.

He hated girls who talked slang, and, according to his views, made a boast of being unladylike.

The fourth personage would have gone unnoticed, only she, too, came in search of letters, and as she passed him, he caught sight of a particularly dainty little foot in a particularly dainty little slipper.

Tom had a keen eye for the beautiful, so he looked up at the owner.

She was dark and rather short, but well proportioned and well dressed. She carried herself with a small air of importance which rather contradicted the otherwise almost girlishness of her face and figure.

She had her back to him, but when she turned round, he saw she looked slightly frail, and had a beautiful complexion. Tom liked her.

She appeared to him aristocratic, neat, and smart, and that was the type of woman that happened to please his bachelor fancy at that period.

When she had hastily run through the letter she had found, she looked up from it suddenly, and her eyes met his. They were blue-grey, fringed with dark lashes, calm, cool, and penetrating.

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For a moment she regarded him with steady scrutiny, then she turned her back to him again and spoke to the other two.

At that moment the hall-porter came forward to help him to the lift and he got up. As the boy closed the gates and the lift slowly rose, he heard a bright voice remark.

"Looks jolly down on his luck, doesn't he? I wonder how he'll like having fifteen females dangling about him, seeing he keeps his feet warm and doesn't get into draughts."

Tom ground his teeth together and swore a solemn oath that the fifteen females should go to—the tropics first.

For three days he remained in his room, which happened to be a very comfortable one, with a good view, but on the fourth he ventured down about twelve o'clock. He was sufficiently better to be able to walk by leaning on a stick, and, finding the hall empty, he dragged himself to the winter garden. That was deserted also, so he made his way to the reading-room, and was soon comfortably ensconced in a large easy chair with The Times.

No one came near him, and he began to feel reassured about the fifteen females, whom he could not quite banish from his mind.

Suddenly the door was thrown open boisterously, and an unmistakable voice remarked, "I haven't time now; I've got a beastly letter to write. I'll have a hundred up after lunch."

When she discovered the occupant of the easy chair, she stood still and faced him a moment, then said frankly: "I hope you're better."

Tom looked up from his paper with a somewhat rigid face but it relaxed a little at sight of flushed cheeks and shining eyes glowing after healthy exercise.

"Thanks, I'm getting on nicely," he replied.

"Shall you be downstairs this evening, do you think?"

"No, I think not," growing stiff again.

"Because we're trying to get up Progressive Whist," she continued, undaunted, "and I thought you might like to play. A shilling a head and three prizes. First, second, and booby."

"Thanks; I think I won't play to-night," decidedly, as female solicitudes ad libitum loomed in the distance. Then he glanced suggestively at his newspaper.

"All right. It's rather slow. Such a lot of old fossils join who don't know one card from another," and she turned to a writing table.

As soon as her pen was busily scratching over her paper, Tom looked up. He was getting a little tired of his own company, and Joe Heely was a very pleasing sight to the eyes, whatever she might be to the ears. Everything about her was fresh, vigorous, and unconventional. She wrote her letter bent nearly double, with her arms sprawling on the table; and Tom could just see two neat ankles and a pair of feet curled round the legs of her chair.

Occasionally she stopped short with a frown, and nibbled vigorously at the end of her pen.

Her hair looked as if nothing would ever induce it to keep tidy, indeed she was not to be commended for special tidiness in any particular, but she had a charming little tip-tilted nose, a lovely colour, and a pretty waist.

Tom took her in, in his usual deliberate fashion, and wished she talked Queen's English, as she would then have been very passable, even to his fastidious tastes.

Suddenly, in the middle of one of her onslaughts on the penholder, she looked up and their eyes met before he had time to lower his.

She hesitated a moment and then said imploringly:

"Could you tell me how to spell 'razzle dazzle'?"

Tom regarded her a trifle scornfully, then he suddenly half smiled, for something in her face was positively irresistible.

He made an attempt to help her, confessing that he was very uncertain about it himself.

"I've got that and it doesn't look right," she replied readily, "I've crossed it out twice already, too. Can you suggest something else that means the same?"

"What does it mean?"

"What does razzle dazzle mean?" in surprise. "Why you go out on the razzle dazzle. It's much the same as a beano."

"A sort of holiday, in fact."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then why don't you call it by its proper name?"

She smiled mischievously.

"They'd think I was awfully ill if I did," she said, with amusement. "I suppose I'll have to put 'spree,' but it's so jolly commonplace," and without more ado she went briskly on with her letter.

When she had finished, folded, and directed it, she threw her pen down, heaved a huge sigh of relief, and exclaimed—

"Thank goodness that's done!"

Then she got up and prepared to depart.

Tom decided she was better than no one and detained her.

"Are there many in the hydro?" he asked, sitting up, and looking a little more congenial.

"About twenty-five altogether. The usual crew."

"What does that mean?"

"Well, the kind of people who are generally in hydros, especially this time of the year."

"I can't say I know much about them."

"No? Well I spend half the year in them, so I know just about all there is to know."

She came and balanced herself on the arm of a large easy chair in front of him, seeing he seemed inclined to be sociable.

"I'm here with my father. He's got gout or rheumatism or sciatica or something. I really don't know which, but he thinks the waters are good for it, whatever it is. There's only we two, and we trot round together, stopping about two months at each place if we like it. It's good fun here at Easter, but it's deadly dull now."

"Have you been here long?"

Tom's voice had grown almost affable.

He argued, after all, she was only a mere girl, and, in many respects, decidedly better company than the average "amiable-young-lady" type.

"Two weeks. How long are you going to stay?"

"I don't know. Not long, I hope."

"You don't like it? Well, you didn't look as if you did the first day. In fact you looked pretty sick at everything generally. You'll get on better when you feel at home. There's a good lot of fun to be had out of the people. Still," with a twinkle in her eyes, "it's pretty bad to be an invalid here."

"Why?"

"You'll get asked about a dozen times a day how you are, and if you've had your bath. You'll also have an average of seven prescriptions a week offered you. If you take my tip you'll decline the lot, because if you take

one, the giver will immediately claim a kind of right of possession over you. I know. I've tried it," and she nodded her head sagely.

"I've come to take the waters and I don't want anything else, that's very certain."

"Rather," with emphasis, "just wait till you've tried them. You can smell them long before you get there, and they taste like rotten eggs. I'd rather have the gout any day."

Tom looked a trifle gloomy, so she rallied him brightly.

"You get used to them," she said, "in fact I believe some people get to like them.

"I wonder where you're going to sit at meals"—running on—"there's a vacant seat at our table, but a cruel assortment for company. I sit opposite a man who looks in all directions at once. It makes me feel as if I was squinting myself abominably. He's got a little bit off the top too, so perhaps I shall catch that as well. I've warned Dad, but he won't move because he sits next to a nice old lady with white curls he's taken a fancy to. I make her eyes almost start out of her head sometimes. She gasps 'my dear child' and turns pale. Her niece sits opposite. She's a 'prunes and prism' miss. I just enjoy shocking them. It's ripping sport. Sometimes it almost makes the girl's hair stand on end, only it happens to be plastered down so that it can't. I nearly made the cross-eyed man look straight the other day, with fright, for he's very pally with the proper young miss.

"P'raps they'll put you next to Miss Bush. My stars! —I wouldn't be you for something if they do."

"Why?"

"Oh, she's gone clean mad over the Anglo-Israelite question. You'll have Israelites with your soup, with your fish, with your entrées, joints, everything in fact. It isn't a bit of use trying to stop her, because you can't. She can't stop herself. I had her on toast awfully yesterday. She'd had three goes at me and I'd had enough of it, so after pretending to listen for a little while, I said, 'Well if the English belong to the tribe of Benjamin and the Americans to the tribe of Manasseh, who was the father of Zebedee's children?' She was wild. She's treated me with haughty disdain ever since, which is precisely what I wanted."

"What on earth is the Anglo-Israelite question?" he asked. "I've never heard of it."

"Oh, it's some odd notion that we are the Lost Tribes of Israel. I didn't know there were any Lost Tribes before. I don't see what it matters either way. If they've been lost all these years and we've managed without them so well, they might as well stay lost. Anyhow I don't care a 'toss up' whether I'm a bit of them or not. But Miss Bush will explain," emphatically "you wait; you'll hear it all soon enough. She holds, forth in the drawing-room sometimes. She'll give you a genealogical table showing Queen Victoria's descent from King David. When she told me about it, I said that was a poor tale; my ancestors escaped in the Ark."

"There seem to be some curious people here."

"My word, yes! A regular old curiosity shop. Several of them look as if they'd been dug up. There's a man who belongs to the 'peculiar people' and a Christolian. There's an actress, a sister of mercy, and a salvationist. There's an American Oof-bird too. We call him Klondyke. He thinks I'm very 'haffable,' and says he 'ates 'aughty 'ighb rn lydies.'"

Tom's face broadened into a genuine smile. She really was the most extraordinary young person he had met, and yet she looked remarkably bewitching, gracefully poised on the arm of the chair, swinging one foot.

"What's a Christolian?" he asked, beginning to think his education must have been very much neglected.

"Goodness only knows. They're the latest thing in sects, I think.

"They do a lot of bathing and praying. Immersion, I suppose they'd call it, but they wear bathing dresses, so it's much the same thing. But you'll know them all in a day or two, you see. There's a few nice fussy old ladies who'll mother you like anything. They've got fat, doughy hands, you know the sort, and they'll hover round you like birds of prey. You'll be a perfect godsend. They just love an interesting young man invalid. I know them. They swarm in hydros. If they've got marriageable daughters they'll positively fondle you," and her eyes danced in keen anticipation.

Tom looked his disgust, and just then the luncheon bell rang.

"Can you get along all right?" she asked briskly.

"Yes, thanks. Don't you wait."

She darted off and he followed leisurely.

In the dining hall he found himself her *vis-à-vis*, but a little lower down the table. When he took his seat she nodded to him brightly, and glanced meaningly towards a rather masculine looking lady, with a high forehead and spectacles, who sat at the other end of the long table. The visitors were not all in yet, so she leant across and remarked in a low voice:

"The Lost Israelite, you're all right so far."

He smiled back and then her father, a jovial old gentleman with a red face and little twinkling eyes, claimed her attention.

A few minutes later, the swinging door was pushed open, and the girl who had first caught his fancy came in.

She wore a smart tailor made frock and a sailor hat looking even nicer than she had done before.

Tom wondered where she sat, and was not a little pleased when she took the vacant chair beside him.

She glanced at him casually as she sat down, but for some minutes took no further notice of him. At last she turned and asked:

"Are you going to venture out to-day? It's beautifully mild."

"I think not," he replied; "if it keeps fine I may attempt my first glass of water to-morrow morning."

"You are taking treatment?"

"That is what I have come for."

"So have I. It's my first experience, and I can't say I like it."

"No? Well I never expected to. I'm simply obeying orders."

"And I. I suppose we're all much in the same box this time of the year. In the summer this place is very gay, and only about half are invalids."

"You've been before, then?"

"Yes, two or three times for a change. I like a little company; it's dull in the winter, living alone."

He glanced at her left hand in surprise, and saw the plain gold circlet.

Divining his thoughts she said:

"Since my husband died I have travelled about half the year. It is very nice to be able to be independent and go alone. We married women have an immense advantage in that respect."

He took a sidelong glance at her, and she met his eyes frankly.

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"You are thinking how very young I look, I expect," she said with a charming smile; "at least, nearly everyone does."

"I must confess you surprise me," he replied. He was thinking she was the very youngest widow he had ever seen.

"I'm older than I look," she answered, with the same frankness; "it runs in our family to wear well," and she laughed a little. "Are you going to play whist to-night?"

"The young lady opposite, with her father, asked me a little while ago, and I declined."

"Miss Heely," said his companion, following his glance, "she's a nice girl. Too slangy and boisterous perhaps, but very jolly. She keeps us all going."

"So I should imagine," with a little inward smile.

She laughed softly.

"Has she been talking to you?"

"Yes, in the writing room."

"Oh, that's just Joe. She makes friends with everybody directly they come. It doesn't matter who or what they are, she samples them, as she calls it, at the first opportunity. She's very quick at summing anyone up, and if she doesn't like them, she drops them; but she's very good-natured. I'm sorry you're not going to play whist; why not change your mind? It isn't very exciting, but it passes the evening."

"You have to move about, don't you?"

"Yes, but you needn't. There's another invalid never does. They arrange accordingly."

"Does it last long?"

"No, we usually finish at nine-thirty on account of the invalids. If you decide to play you put your name on the paper in the hall, and give your shilling to whoever's managing it."

Later on Tom's name was added to the list, and, contrary to his expectations, he rather enjoyed himself.

Some of his partners were certainly very trying, but pretty Mrs. Wattham and Joe Heely were very entertaining, each in her way.

Joe said something naughty when her partner trumped her ace, and scandalised the other lady player, but she did not seem to mind at all. As she passed on to the next table, she gave him a sly glance, and said under her breath:

"Look out, Israelites are trumps." and he immediately found himself face to face with the spectacled, masculine lady.

Rather curiously he began and ended with Mrs. Wattham as his partner, and as he did not feel especially tired, he remained beside her to hear some music. No one took much notice of the performance, so they kept up a desultory conversation, and when he at last retired, they were on a fair road to becoming very good friends.

A week passed and he began to enjoy himself. Mrs. Wattham was very good company and Joe always enlivening, what little he saw of them, though the former of course was always with him at meals.

His distant manner effectually frightened off the motherly ladies, and the dreaded fifteen females sank into a trifling two or three, whom it was rather entertaining than otherwise to avoid.

One was "The Lost Israelite," as Joe called her. Another "Old Mother Rosebuds," likewise christened by Joe, and the third a spinster on the wrong side of five-and-thirty, who the same young critic said was giving up hope, but trying a last spurt. He took Joe's advice and scandalised the first at the earliest opportunity, but the other two required more careful management. The old lady, who got her nickname from a marked predilection for rose-buds in her bonnets, or rose-pink, and who dressed in an absurdly juvenile fashion, had a daughter with her of a marriageable age. She was fair, with round blue eyes and pink cheeks, and she simpered perpetually, except when she giggled outright. Joe called her "The Family Hope" because her mother had once rashly confided to her that she was very much admired by gentlemen, and she had great hopes for her. She was highly amused and entertained when she discovered the family hope was at present centred in Tom, and lost no time in chaffing him about it. The spinster he eluded as best he could, but it cost him careful forethought occasionally, and sometimes he was hopelessly victimised, to Joe's infinite delight.

But with pretty Mrs. Wattham he got on admirably. She was a clever little woman and a very entertaining companion. She was always dainty and neat, and suited his taste to a nicety. If he met her in the pump room he was decidedly pleased, for she helped to make the time fly. One evening after a few days he found her in a quiet corner of the winter-garden, and with a murmured plea, took the empty seat beside her. Their conversation became more confidential than usual, and presently his companion shewed him a photo, saying casually: "How do you like that?

"I am engaged to be married to him," she added.

Tom scanned the photo carefully.

"He's very good-looking," he said.

"Yes, very, but he's short. I'm sorry. I prefer tall men."

Tom did not reply, but continued to study the photo. He stood six foot one himself.

"He has a nice face," he remarked presently.

"Yes, and he's a good fellow."

She spoke a trifle lukewarmly, but Tom did not notice it. On the whole he was glad of the news because he liked her company very much, but he did not want their friendship to ripen into anything else, being too contented as a bachelor to want to marry. He felt they could both indulge in a passing friendship safely now, and became even more sociable in consequence. He even suggested a bicycle ride to Ripon, as soon as he was well enough, and she assented with her usual charming frankness.

Joe strolled into the recreation room presently, and discovered them in the leafy corner. Her eyes twinkled, but no one saw, and turning on her heel she made for the piano.

She ran through several operatic airs first, and then sang in a bright voice snatches of operatic songs, including "The Maiden with the Downcast Eye," continuing until Mrs. Wattham and Tom got up and sauntered towards her.

Later on she found Tom alone in the hall, and sitting on a table so that she could swing her feet, prepared to enjoy herself.

"I'm afraid I forgot to warn you in one of the most serious quarters," she began slyly.

Tom took a long whiff at his cigar and made no reply, watching the smoke curl upwards. Joe mimicked him.

"Blue-grey smoke suggests blue-grey eyes to me," she said. "What does it suggest to you?"

"Vapour," drily.

"Not bad," with a little nod of approval, adding, "I guess the blue-grey eyes don't intend ending in either smoke or vapour."

There was a tacit understanding of good fellowship between these two now.

Tom put up with Joe's slang, and Joe let him grumble to her, when he felt ill or out of sorts generally.

"You don't always guess right," he retorted, "your very limited experience often misleads you."

"Heavens," with a little gasp, "do you write books?"

"No, why?"

"Sounded a bit like it. I always suspect people who speak in measured phrases. 'Tisn't natural. I sometimes find they have the madness without the genius—a loose tile in fact.

"Mrs. Wattham isn't mad though," running on, "she's all there right enough."

"She's very nice. What's the matter with her?"

"I didn't say she wasn't."

"You implied it."

"I didn't. I implied she was clever."

"Well, you mean designing, and designing people are not nice. As a matter of fact, she's very nice. She's one of the few women you can be very friendly with without fear."

"Rats."

Tom relapsed into dignified silence, conscious that Joe's pretty mouth was politely scornful.

"It's a good race," she went on presently, "the Family Hope, the Lost Israelite, and Charming Frankness. I'll lay two to one on Charming Frankness."

"You shouldn't bet; it's unladylike."

"I'm not intended to represent an Incarnation of Propriety," she replied slyly, "though I daresay I could do the Charming Frankness trick if I tried."

"You'd do the frankness all right," looking sly in his turn.

"She might teach me the other, only it would perhaps be dangerous," audaciously.

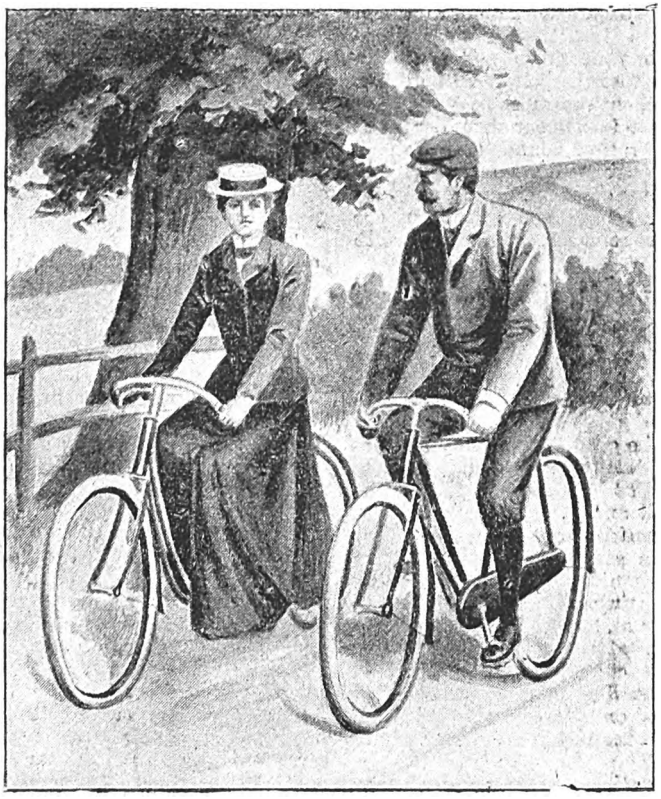
"I suppose you know you're talking arrant nonsense."

"Call it bosh. You should always suit your conversation to your listener."

"Sometimes it's an advantage for a listener to try and reach the higher standard."

"It depends. One can't live in very rarefied air. Here comes Mother Rosebuds. I'm off;—wouldn't deprive you for anything."

"No, don't go," quickly.



They bicycled together.

Joe raised her eyebrows in feigned surprise.

"You'll put up with the arrant nonsense then, if I'll keep the dragon at bay?"

"Yes, or anything else you like. She gives me the hump."

"The what?" in a horror-struck voice. "I suppose you mean a depression of the mental faculties? But perhaps you're coming down to my level?"

There was a pause, then Tom remarked casually, "I suppose you know Mrs. Wattham is engaged?"

"Whew!" and Joe answered by a low whistle.

"You didn't?"

"No, she isn't so confiding to everybody."

"Well, she is. I've seen his photograph, so now you see you were talking arrant nonsense."

"I call that a stunner," was her only comment. Then she sprang from the table, saying:

"I give it up. I'm going to see what Dad's after. I daren't leave him alone for long, because that white-haired lady's such a giddy old puss. Ta-ta," and she did a little step-dance across the hall and vanished.

That night Elsie Wattham stood a long time at her window, lost in thought. When she at last turned away she stood in front of a portrait on her chimney piece a moment.

"I could easily break it off," she said to herself. "He'd be awfully cut up, but he wouldn't be very surprised. I hate to be poor. I'm certain I should get sick of him if we had to study every sixpence."

She turned away and began to uncoil her beautiful hair.

"He didn't look sorry when I told him," she mused, "but that doesn't go for much."

A little later she looked again at the photo and a dangerous smile played about her mouth.

"I suppose if it came to that," she said, "I should let you and a good deal more go, for the sake of Tom Whitehead."

* * * * *

Three weeks passed quickly and Easter drew near. Tom was very undecided whether to remain or not. A very gay programme had been arranged, and every room in the house was taken, beside several outside.

The Monday before Good Friday, Joe and Mrs. Wattham openly tried persuasion, but he would not

compromise himself, saying he would perhaps decide the following evening.

The past fortnight had considerably strengthened the friendship between these three, and they were now constantly together.

Joe sometimes got black looks from Elsie Wattham, but she paid small heed to them, because she considered Tom just as much her friend as the pretty widow's. He had, in fact, blossomed out a good deal under her enlivening influence, and they were the best friends in the world, though somehow they rarely found themselves far distant from Mrs. Wattham.

Not that they minded, for she still continued as charming as ever, and Tom often thought how lost he would be without her.

For Joe had other friends beside her father, to whom she was devoted in her own fashion; whereas Elsie Wattham had no one else but herself to consider. So they bicycled together, and took their waters together, always in the spirit of excellent comradeship.

Once or twice Tom tried to talk to her about her *fiancé* and her future, but after her first confidence, she had grown strangely reserved about him, and tactfully changed the subject. On one occasion, however, she let Tom see she was vexed with him in some way, but she only made one or two vague remarks, finishing up with the sentence:

"It's all very fine, but there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

Another time she told him she did not think it was possible for her to be a poor man's wife, adding, after a pause: "I think it was largely for the sake of peace and quietness I consented to try. Basil was so determined."

Tom did not reply, and she grew bright and entertaining again, winning his gratitude by making the time fly, and her kind consideration for his health. For he was not by any means well and often suffered a good deal of pain. On these occasions she was at her very best, and he was more than grateful. In fact, he was beginning to look for her almost hourly, and to think with real regret of their parting. Yet, though he was dangerously near becoming so, he was not in love with her. He hardly knew why, but he was vaguely conscious of something that, in spite of everything, almost repulsed him when he stopped to consider it—something owing to the attention she lavished on him, and received from him, although she openly confessed herself engaged to another man.

For men are not blind to these things, although they often pretend to regard them lightly. No woman raises herself in a man's eyes by seeming to treat her lover lightly, or thoughtlessly, though many women appear to think that this is highly commendable. When she casually asked him to stay over Easter he demurred.

He did not know whether he wanted to stay or not. They were sitting in the winter-garden listening to some music. Elsie Wattham had some fancy work in her hands, and he was lying on a lounge chair idly watching her. She was telling him what took place during the festive week and painting it in very glowing colours. He was listening with interest, and spoke as if he had almost decided to stay.

"The dances are very good fun," she said; "you see, there are no duty dances at all, and if you happen to find a partner whose step suits yours better than anyone else's, you can have half the programme together."

They had danced together the previous Saturday evening, and both enjoyed it thoroughly.

"That is the principal inducement," he said, "if I was sure I might have half yours. And most of the rest with Joe," he added, after a slight pause.

She smiled a little but did not reply, and the question was left there.

Later on Joe had her turn.

"It's all rot," she said, "you're not going. You can just as well stay now you're here. What on earth do you want to run away for just when all the fun's coming on. You'll have a ripping time if you stay. I know two or three awfully nice men coming, and some nice girls too. I guess we shall make things hum between us," she finished with inward relish.

"I'll decide to-morrow evening," he said; "it rather depends upon the letters I get to-morrow. I should like to stay, if only for the sake of the dancing."

"Of course. It's a tip-top floor, and there'll be plenty of nice partners."

Elsie Wattham went to bed a little anxious that night. She had not expected him to demur about staying. She thought he would do so willingly if he could. She wondered a little if her engagement were partly the reason, and her mind took a resentful turn towards the original of the portrait still standing on her chimney-piece.

"I thing I'll break it off to-morrow," she mused, "at any rate I will if Mr. Whitehead stays for Easter."

The following morning she went to Leeds for the day to do some shopping, and as Joe and her father took a trip to Bolton Abbey, Tom was left to his own resources. He read the paper first and then strolled into the hall and stood a few moments in the porch, lounging with his hands in his pockets and a cigarette in his mouth. He felt quite lost without Mrs. Wattham or Joe, and the place looked deserted, nearly everyone having been tempted abroad by the bright sunshine.

Presently a hired carriage with luggage on it, came slowly up the hill to the hydro. It came at a crawling pace, and as it drew near, he was able to take a long look at the occupants without their seeing him.

They were two girls dressed in deep mourning, the one considerably older than the other. The elder girl was tall and striking-looking. She had hair so light that it was almost white, and it was arranged in massive coils about a shapely head. The unrelieved gloom of her dress only made it fairer, at the same time enhancing the ivory whiteness of her skin. She was not pretty, but there was something about her face better than mere prettiness, and strangers were generally drawn to look at her twice. The other girl was evidently a great invalid, and looked about fifteen, being small and fragile for that. When the carriage stopped, the elder sister—for the relationship was unmistakable—alighted quickly.

"You must let me lift you out," she said, in a low, musical voice, "and then someone will help me get you up the steps. You won't need your crutches, will you?" putting them on one side.

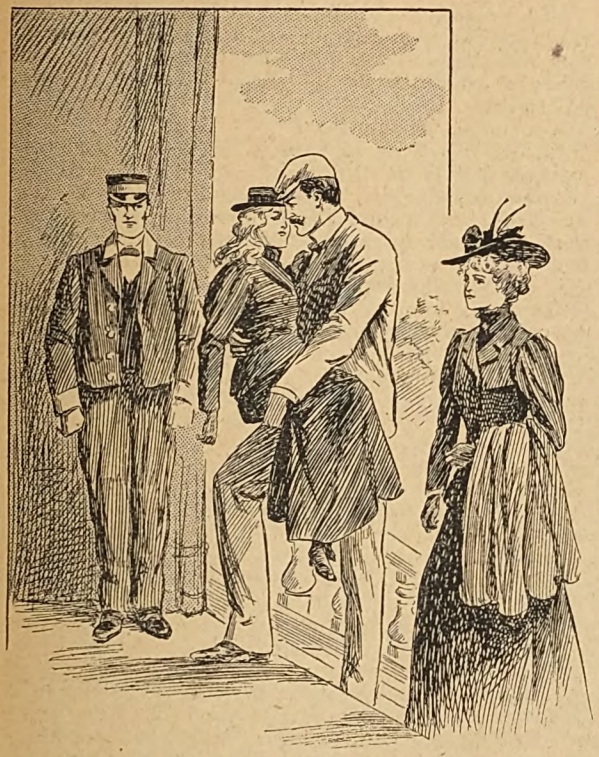
She then put her arm round her sister, and half lifted her to the ground, but finding she could hardly stand, looked round rather anxiously for the hall-porter.

He was just coming forward, but Tom was a little before him.

"Will you allow me to help you?" he asked, raising his cap.

She looked up gracefully, and he saw she had large grey eyes of great depth and sweetness.

"Thank you very much," she said simply, "my sister is cramped with the long sitting. We have had a troublesome journey."



He carried her straight into the drawing-room.

"Will she let me carry her?" he asked, looking at the younger girl.

She looked up at him confidingly and murmured: "Thanks," so he took her in his arms and carried her straight into the drawing-room, laying her down on the nearest sofa. Her sister followed, and again thanked him in the same sweet voice, arranging the cushion under the invalid's head.

"Can I do anything else?" he asked half eagerly. "May I settle with the driver for you?"

"If you wouldn't mind asking the porter to, I should be very grateful," she answered, raising her eyes to his for a moment, and then lowering them again to the white tired face on the cushion.

He executed her request, and then hovered about in the hall. He would like to have returned and offered his services still further, but was afraid to seem officious. He recognised fully, as nearly everyone did who came in contact with her, that Ethel Fortescue could only be treated with marked deference.

He contented himself instead by suggesting that the invalid should be asked if she should like a glass of wine before going upstairs.

Then he fetched a paper and sat down opposite the drawing-room door.

Presently it opened and the manageress appeared. At the same moment he heard the voice he listened for, say:

"I think she would be better carried, if we could manage it. I dare say the porter will help me."

Tom sprang up instantly. He had never been so glad in his life that he was a big fellow; whereas the porter was undersized.

"If the young lady will allow me," he said, "I could easily carry her."

He stood in the doorway, and the elder girl looked up.

"Thank you," she said quietly, and he went in.

The little invalid raised her head half apologetically.

"I'm afraid I'm very heavy," she said.

"You're as light as a feather," he answered in a wonderfully kind voice, and took her up at once.

All the rest of the morning he hovered about the hall, but he had no further glimpse of the wonderful fair hair. He learnt, however, that their name was Fortescue, and the younger girl a cripple, and that they had been to the hydro before.

"They generally come earlier, while we are very quiet," the manageress told him; "but this year they were obliged to put off their visit because Miss Daisy was too ill to travel. They will remain upstairs, I expect, until the festivities are over, as they always keep to themselves very much."

Tom hoped they would change their minds this time, and watched the door all through the lunch. But he watched in vain, for the girls had their luncheon taken to their room.

In the afternoon he again haunted the hall. He hardly knew why, but he could not get the picture of the fair hair and sweet grey eyes out of his mind, and was longing for another glimpse.

At four o'clock, however, he gave up hope and retired to his favourite chair in the reading room.

Five minutes afterwards the door opened, and a woman's dress rustled lightly as she crossed to the writing-table. He looked up eagerly and saw the sight he had been watching for so long. She stood up straight and slim, half turned from him, and examined two or three pens.

The blinds were drawn, but a long line of bright sunlight had found its way through a chink, and now it rested on her hair, making it look like a halo round her pure, pale face. She sat down without having seen him, and commenced to write. Apparently the pens were bad, for she tried two or three and then got up to seek another. Tom drank in every movement eagerly. He thought she was the most graceful woman he had ever set eyes on. Suddenly she turned and discovered him. Perhaps his eyes were over eager, for she coloured slightly and withdrew her glance.

"The pens are all bad," she said. "I wonder where I could find a new one?"

"Yes, they are villainous," he replied getting up. "They ought to look after this room better. May I fetch you one from the office, or will you use my stylographic? It writes very well," and he handed it to her.

"Thanks," she said in her usual quiet manner, and took it.

"I hope your sister is feeling better," he ventured.

"Yes, thanks, she has had a nice long rest. The train always tries her very much."

Then she sat down to her letter, and Tom returned to his scrutiny undisturbed, though professedly reading his newspaper.

The moment she had finished he was on the alert again.

"Thank you so much," and she handed him his pen.

"You are very welcome," rising as he took it and adding:

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"If your sister would like to come down for a little while, will you allow me to fetch her?"

She paused a moment and rested one hand on a chair back.

Tom did not know whether to look at her hand, her eyes or her hair, but he wished he could see them all at once, for all were beautiful.

"You are very kind," she said, "but she will not come down to-day."

"Perhaps to morrow," hesitatingly.

"Nor to-morrow either, I think. We are very comfortable upstairs. Shall you be here on Thursday? Because I am sure she would like to thank you again herself for your kindness."

"Yes, I expect so, but, indeed, it was only a pleasure."

She moved forward, and he followed to open the door for her.

As she passed out she bent her head slightly in acknowledgement, and the ray of sunlight caught her hair again. When he had closed the door and again taken his seat, he felt as if the room had suddenly grown very deserted.

In the evening Joe and Elsie Wattham sought him in the winter-garden.

The latter had missed her train home, and had to have her dinner alone after the usual hour, so neither had seen him since the morning.

Joe was in high spirits after what she called a scrumptious day, and without any ceremony attacked him instantly upon the question of his departure. At first he teased her, while Elsie Wattham sat silently waiting in feigned indifference. At last she heard what she wanted, and the colour deepened in her cheeks and her eyes shone.

"Well, I'm going to stay, so will that satisfy you," he said, and Joe clapped her hands.

Elsie looked up, half expecting to meet his eyes, but he was just making a cigarette and did not see her glance. She was partially satisfied, however, and hoped great things of the next week.

That night she wrote to Basil Caird, breaking off her engagement, posting the letter early the next day.

* * * * *

Three days of hurry and bustle followed, and the Trio spent most of their time in the hall, watching the numerous arrivals. Tom was quite satisfied with the arrangment, because when Ethel Fortescue chanced to come downstairs, he was certain to see her. True, he only received a smile and a casual greeting, but he treasured them up as the best event of the day.

Elsie wondered a little and drew from him the story of their meeting, He was just as much with her as before, but his manner was more emphatically that of a friend than ever, and she began to grow secretly anxious. For she no longer hid from herself that she really loved him, whereas she could not but feel that she was still the same to him. There was no constraint and no awkwardness, he simply held out the hand of good fellowship, believing the feeling was perfectly mutual. And now, though his thoughts were perpetually elsewhere, there was nothing to interfere with their friendship, and only eyes sharpened by love could have detected the slight inflection of change in speech and glance that told so much, either for, or against.

Joe on her part endeared herself to him quite unconsciously by sharing his new interest. She had chanced to enter the lift with her one day, and raved about her with girlish enthusiasm ever since.

"The Goddess" she had named her, true to her usual habit, and she looked out almost as eagerly as Tom.

Neither of them met with much success, however, for Ethel Fortescue and her sister remained in their apartments nearly all day, merely passing through the hall when they went out.

But on Good Friday, by a curious run of circumstances, it fell out that they were all four sitting together, enjoying the spring sunshine in the garden. Joe chatted gaily to the little invalid, and made her laugh till the tears came, with her quaint description of some of the visitors, and Tom talked quietly to Ethel. She was not very communicative, seeming to prefer listening to Joe and watching her sister, but he was too pleased to be sitting near her to care much about anything else.

Elsie Wattham joined them later on, and they appeared a happy little party to those who passed backwards and forwards near them, no one dreaming of the cruel arrows Fate was sowing broadcast in their midst.

Saturday and Sunday passed uneventfully, but also without a return of Friday's good fortune. Either the sisters did not wish for companionship, or they did not care for that which offered, for they kept rigidly to themselves. Joe alone was favoured, and that on the invalid's account. Ethel invited her upstairs to tea at Daisy's request, and she was only too pleased to go. When she came down she sought out Tom to tell him all about it, little dreaming how he hung on her lightest word.

"Is Miss Fortescue coming down to the concert?" he asked when Joe paused.

"Yes, I'm going to fetch her," she replied; "we're to have a quiet corner together, but I'm sure she won't mind you joining us," and Tom's world was suddenly flooded with sunlight.

But with the realisation, the brooding shadows crept closer, and he began to feel a strange chill creeping over him, and a nameless dread.

She was so very reserved and quiet. She seemed to have built up an impassable barrier between herself and all the world, through which her steady eyes looked out, with only patient, unmovable sadness.

Tom sat back in the shadow and watched her. If he took his eyes off her face, they returned again almost immediately, drawn by an irresistible force, and he knew that he loved her with the whole strength of his being. Yet he did not seek to shew it. Something almost like reverence held him back. In the presence of the deathless sorrow in her eyes, he felt as if he were on holy ground. Even Joe was quiet and subdued, but she nestled as close as she dare to the slender blackrobed figure, vaguely conscious of a sympathy for which she did not know the cause.

Elsie sat with them too, but she kept her eyes on the platform and the performers. She was paler than usual, but otherwise unchanged.

And unknown to each, they all felt the presence of an indefinable dread hovering near.

With a bitter irony that so often seems to delight whatever power it is that rules our actions, the indefinable took tangible shape on the evening of the grand fancy dress ball.

When the dark cloud came down upon that quiet four, over two hundred people were gathered in gay costumes with radiant faces to fill the building with merriment and gladness.

At first Ethel had resolutely refused to appear; but Joe's entreaties and her sister's evident desire led her

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at last to seek a quiet corner where they could watch unobserved.

The two younger girls enjoyed it all immensely, the little invalid growing quite radiant. Joe wore a Pierrette dress and looked charming, but she was quite willing to sit out and amuse her new friend.

Ethel drew back into the shadow and her face was just a little sadder than usual. Tom was dancing with Elsie, who, as the Queen of the Geisha, carried off the palm of beauty almost unchallenged.

When the dance was over they approached the corner where the other three sat and took seats beside them. Then two partners claimed Joe and Elsie, and Tom was left alone with the sisters. Daisy talked to him delightedly, but Ethel sat pale and silent. She seemed anxious and uneasy although she tried hard not to show it. It had been impossible for her not to glean something of his feelings, and it was evident the knowledge did not gladden her. He asked her to go to supper with him, and she declined firmly. When Joe came back, however, she had to give in, for the latter had quite made up her mind to take Daisy, as soon as the rush was over, and Ethel could not very well help following on Tom's proffered arm.

So they passed through the knots of laughing, gaily-dressed dancers to the now deserted supper-room, and many pairs of eyes turned with interest to look at the tall slender woman in black, with the gleaming white neck, and wonderful hair, that gave back no answering gleams to the bright lights, yet shed a pale glory round her head.

Tom never quite knew how it happened, but by-and-bye he found himself alone with her and the room in semi-darkness, while a branching palm hid them almost entirely from view.

He needed no second thought to recognise his opportunity, and in a few minutes was pouring his love into her ears, indifferent to the little encouragement she had given him.

But she shrank from him with a pained, beseeching expression, and when he paused a moment, broke in with an earnest entreaty that he would stop. She laid her hand on his arm, and the touch, with the pallor of her face, made him suddenly dumb.

"Can't you give me even a ray of hope?" he asked at last brokenly.

"No," she replied, with the calmness of despair, "my grandmother, father and two brothers died in a lunatic asylum."

He sat as if stunned, scarcely seeming to breathe.

At last he looked up and their eyes met; but only unflinching steadfastness, and that old depth of sorrow, met the speechless misery in his.

He put his hand on hers with a sudden, passionate clasp.

"If it had not been—" he began.

"*There is no 'if,'*" she answered slowly and painfully; "there is only the plain fact. The curse must die with my sister and me."

* * * * *

In the shadows of the winter garden Elsie found him when the evening was nearly over, and she started when she saw his face.

"Is anything the matter? Are you ill?" she asked hastily.

"No," he replied in a voice she hardly recognised; "is this our dance?"

"Yes, but we needn't dance it. I'm tired."

He seemed relieved and they sat down, but he did not speak and the wonder grew on her. Yet she did not like to question him.

"Will you send a message to Daisy Fortescue?" she asked.

"Shall we get our ride to Ripon to-morrow?" she asked presently. He started a little.

"I'm so sorry," he said, "but I shall have to ask you to excuse me. I am leaving early in the morning."

She caught her breath and gripped the chair hard.

"You have decided quickly," she said, looking away from him.

"Yes."

There was a moment's pause, then he rallied himself, and, leaning forward, attempted to talk as freely as usual. She helped him as well as she could, but the effort was hardly less for her.

"I expect I shall not see you in the morning," she said, as they were saying good-night, "so this is good-bye as well."

"I'm afraid so, but hope we shall meet again. If I happen to be in Saltaire I may call, mayn't I?"

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"Yes, do, and I hope you'll keep strong now. Good-bye," and turning, she went slowly upstairs.

The liveliest of the dancers were now collected in the hall, and their gay voices and laughter followed her step by step.

A scarlet Mephistopheles and a merry Bo-peep were enjoying themselves on the top stair. They moved for her to pass, and the girl exclaimed:

"Are you going to bed already, Mrs. Wattham? Hasn't it been lovely? I never enjoyed a dance more in all my life."

Elsie murmured a reply and hurried on.

She wanted to shut those laughing voices out of her ears. She felt as if she would willingly have blotted out existence itself.

Joe saw him off the next morning, although he went before breakfast. She had found him the previous night having a solitary cigar outside, and when she saw his face her quick perception told her sufficient to understand, for she had also seen them come from the supper-room together. So she had not asked any questions, but just slipped her arm through his in her frank, unconventional way, and when he told her he was leaving, asked at once if she might see him off.

"You'll write to me if you ever come near York," she said, as they stood waiting for the train, "and if father and I happen to be in Birmingham, we shall come and see you. You won't forget, will you?"

"No, I shall be delighted to see you. You've helped to make four weeks pass almost like four days."

"It ought to have been three," she remarked, looking down the line, and Tom knew what she meant.

She was standing as usual, with her fingers tucked between the buttons of her cycle skirt, blissfully indifferent to public opinion.

She looked very fresh and charming nevertheless, and he was really sorry to lose her bright companionship.

"Will you write to me?" he said. "I shall like to know how they are all getting on."

"Yes, I'll tell you all about the Lost Israelite and the Family Hope. Of course, you've asked them for their addresses?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

The train steamed in, and he took his seat.

"Will you send a message to Daisy Fortescue?" she asked, raising her clear eyes to his; "she'll be so disappointed not to have seen you."

"Yes. Tell her what you think would please her best. I should like to have said good-bye to her," and she saw him bite his lip hard.

"All right."

The guard whistled and the train moved.

"Good-bye," he said, wringing her hand till it hurt her.

"Good-bye," she answered cheerfully, "and 'Au Revoir,' if I survive Dot-and-carry-One's' arduous attentions, and the anxiety of steering my fond parent clear of a certain white-haired lady's clutches."

He smiled back at her, but it was a poor attempt at best.

"I guess I'll never meet anyone like him again," she mused, as she watched the receding train, "and the second's never like the first. Heigho!—but it's a silly old world to make such a mess of things so often."

There was a suspicious moisture about her eyes, but her hands were still tucked in those fascinating pockets of hers.

Gertrude Page.

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NEW FIELDS FOR YOUNG EXPLORERS.

What Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, has to say about this.

It is the ambition of most young men to make a name in the world. Few realise what opportunities are open to them in this direction by exploring unknown tracts of the earth, and by giving their names to regions where civilised man has never trod before.

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The highest living authority on the known and unknown geography of the world is, undoubtedly, Sir Clements Markham, the President of the Royal Geographical Society. The Editor of **PEARSON'S MAGAZINE** has succeeded in inducing Sir Clements to give the benefit of his knowledge with regard to the unexplored earth to the general public, and the result is an intensely interesting article in the May **PEARSON'S**, which clearly shows what vast opportunities there are for the young explorers of the day.

After describing where the principal unexplored tracts of country are to be found, Sir Clements Markham comes to the Arctic and Antarctic regions. "One Arctic achievement," he writes, "as yet incomplete, is the discovery of the Northern side of Greenland; another is the discovery of the region up Jones Sound, and north of Parry Islands; a third is the discovery of the wide region between Siberia and Prince Patrick Island. All are difficult, all would yield a rich harvest for science, and all would confer high honour on those who performed them.

"In the Antarctic region still grander work is ready for well-equipped, dauntless, and able explorers. There, an unknown continent, teeming with points of scientific interest, lies concealed behind the southern ice-pack. It has been waiting there during many centuries for the advent of the bold heroes who are destined to solve its mysteries. The time must now be approaching for the Antarctic veil to be raised."

All interested in the subject should turn for full particulars to Sir Clements Markham's admirable article in the May number of **PEARSON'S MAGAZINE**, which, it is hardly necessary to say, contains many other equally interesting articles and stories by the best writers of the day, all profusely illustrated.

My Handsome Lover.

Uncle Meriwether never liked Eustace. He never did him justice from the beginning, and when he heard that I was actually engaged to him, he spoke in such a way that I declared I would not endure it.

"I am old enough, I hope, to choose for myself," said I.

"I don't know about that, Patty," said my uncle, shrugging his shoulders.

But I remained to hear no more. I flounced into the house, slamming the door in Uncle Meriwether's honest, spectacled face, and bursting into tears as soon as I reached the sitting-room.

"It's a shame," said my sister Elspeth. "Don't cry, Patty. I'm sure the whole matter is transparent enough. Uncle Meriwether wouldn't be so domineering about it if he did not want you to marry Paul."

"I wouldn't marry Paul Meriwether if there wasn't another man in the world," said I viciously. "And I'll marry Eustace Dalzell anyhow, now. Uncle Meriwether says we don't know anything about him, but I'm sure we know enough."

That was a false assertion on my part. I only knew of my handsome *fiancé* what he himself had chosen to tell me—namely, that he was a London engineer, staying down at Wraysgeld a few weeks for his health. And his friend, Mr. Belfield, was a stockbroker. Oh, how I wished Mr. Belfield might take a fancy to Elspeth! It would be so nice to be married at the same time—to go together and live in London.

We lived together in the lonely old brick house on the edge of the moor, so that I was very glad when Olive Oatley came down from Binchester to visit us, and brought her wedding set of diamonds to show.

Elspeth and I looked with awe and admiration at the sparkling gems—necklace, earrings, and brooch.

"Are they very valuable?" I asked.

"Six hundred pounds, I believe," said Olive complacently. "They belonged to Herbert's mother, and they are to be re-set before I wear them."

But just then Elspeth gave a start and turned scarlet, and following the direction of her eye, I turned and beheld Eustace Dalzell standing smiling in the doorway, with his hat in his hand.

Somehow the diamonds made me nervous, and I could not help, in the course of the evening, confiding my vague terrors to Eustace.

But Eustace laughed at me, and made light of my fears.

Eustace Dalzell went home earlier than usual that night. In my perturbation I had almost resolved to ask him to remain all night, a self-constituted guardian of our treasures, but I did not venture to do so; and so at ten o'clock we three girls, with Mary in the kitchen, were left to ourselves.

I had intended to sit awake all night, but I must have fallen into a light doze without being aware of it, for the clock was striking twelve when I started at the loud peal of the door bell below. Olive was at my side in an instant. Elspeth had her arm round me, and even Mary hobbled in with a flaring lamp in her hand.

"Go to the door, do, some of you," cried I hysterically. "Ask who it is. Ask what they want."

And while Olive, Elspeth, and the old attendant obeyed my behest I hurriedly threw on my white dressing gown and went to the head of the stairs to listen, for I felt that in an emergency like this some one ought to keep close to the diamonds.

"There is no one here," I heard Elspeth say, after the bolts and bars of the front door were withdrawn.

"Yes, there is. I hear someone groaning at the other end of the veranda," persisted Mary. "Oh, dear, the draught has blown out my candle. This way, Miss Oatley, please—I'm afraid there's been an accident or something."

The next minute the heavy oaken door blew shut with a bang. It was self-fastening on the inside. I was all alone in the house.

A rustle under the vines that draped the north side of the house—a low whistle, and I could hear a voice saying in suppressed accents:

"They're safe enough outside, all three of 'em. Now's your time. Quick!"

It all flashed upon my mind in a second—the sturdy boughs of the wistaria, which afforded so easy a ladder for an aspiring burglar to reach Olive's window—the open casement—the diamonds lying underneath her pillow. My worst fears had come true, and seizing the six-barrelled little pistol I rushed into the room just in time to see a tall figure with a mask over its face spring into the window and steal with cat-like motion across the room.

As his hand lay on the tiny canvas bag containing the precious jewels I raised the pistol and fired. At the same moment a muttered oath, mingled with a cry, sounded in my ears, and the sound of something falling shook the beams of the floor.

I am not one of the fainting kind, but for a minute or two I stood motionless. Then, springing downstairs I admitted the three eager women who were huddled at the door.

"I've shot him! I've killed him!" was all that I could say. "Run up stairs, Mary—and see if—if he is dead."

But Mary would not go alone, so we all hurried up in a crowd—and there, half-sitting, half-lying against the bed-post, with the canvas bag fallen to the floor beside him, and a red pool of blood under his right shoulder-blade was—Eustace Dalzell.

Of course, we went for help to the nearest neighbours; of course, we delivered my gallant lover, who was not fatally injured, over to the police, by whom he was recognised as an old gaol-bird, luxuriating in a new name.

D. Bristowe.

Mr. Twiller's Alibi.

THE snow had been falling for several minutes in little eddying gusts, and already an appreciable number of flakes were collecting on the cape of Miss Dorothy Dempsey's coat as she turned into the street at a swinging pace. On her head, framed by a soft halo of brown hair, in which the drops of moisture glistened here and there, a dark deerstalker hat had slipped coquettishly to one side. Her cheeks were brilliant from the cutting wind, and her eyes shone with exhilaration as she battled against the storm.

To insignificant Bertie Carey, advancing from the opposite direction, she appeared like a delightful vision, a delight considerably influenced of course by the fact that she belonged to the right "set" of visions, or Bertie, being so little a man, would not have looked a second time. Indeed, it is doubtful whether anything short of Miss Dorothy's genealogy on the maternal side would have induced him to give up his daily game of dominoes at the club and join her promenade with such urbane oblivion to the coolness of his reception.

And it is not likely that at any other time Miss Dempsey would have resented his intrusion quite so hotly; but, unfortunately for him, her memory still retained with vigour a graphic description detailed to her only the previous evening by her Cousin Jack, during which, excited to unusual emphasis by Carey's last escapade, he had gone so far as to declare him "a consummate ass, not fit for decent society." Dorothy, having agreed with him in spirit if not to the letter, felt that she was justified in taking strong measures on this occasion.

To walk down the street in his company, at an hour when her friends would be abroad and glancing curiously from their brougham windows or over their shoulders, was a reflection upon her taste and discrimination which she was not ready to endure. Accordingly, before the preliminary greetings were fairly over, she was racking her brain for some way of dismissing him. In vain she meditated a dozen clever feminine manœuvres that, under any other circumstances or in any other locality would have been practicable. It was Carey himself who finally provided her with the means of escape.

"Awfully jolly, this unexpected pleasure of a stroll with you," he murmured, ignoring the gait that was rapidly reducing him to breathlessness.

"Yes, indeed," returned Dorothy, with false serenity; "only it can't be a very long one, as I intend making a call in this street." This with unblushing effrontery, although well aware that she could walk on to the Mansion House without finding a name on her list.

"A mutual friend?" inquired Carey.

"I think not."

"This must be the house, then, since it is the last one."

Miss Dempsey gave a hasty, surreptitious glance at the window curtains and evidently found some reassurance in their design.

"Thanks, yes. I suppose you will be at the Greys? Good afternoon."

"Oh, the Greys!" cried Carey, fired to fresh recollections; "haven't you heard? Then, if I may, I will wait and see if your friend is in; if not, we can continue our chat."

Now, Miss Dorothy being an independent and somewhat peremptory young lady, and having gone to all the trouble and risk of this subterfuge, was anything but pleased at a turn which left her unwittingly outwitted. But having gone so far it was necessary to play the farce out, and ascending the steps with a good deal of suppressed indignation, she pressed the bell. The door was promptly opened by a neat capped maid.

"Is Dr. Robinson in?" she inquired glibly, improvising the first name that came to her.

"I believe so, ma'am; will you walk in?"

For an instant Dorothy wavered in total dismay. This was a contingency for which she found herself completely unprepared. Then, as her glance roved from the waiting Carey below to the girl, who had stepped hospitably back, her resolution was taken; to go in and explain, on meeting the doctor, that he was the wrong man, seemed the simplest and most natural way out of the difficulty, and it would rid her of Carey, which was the main thing.

The room into which she was ushered gave her, as a first impression, a sensation of cheer and comfort and good taste. It was fitted up as half office, half library, and a fire on the hearth shed its unstable light on two large chairs, drawn up in a suggestively confidential manner within the seductive radiance. Dorothy had made a mental comment of all this before becoming aware that one of these inviting chairs had an occupant, who had slowly risen and was now facing her with an open curiosity which he did not take the trouble to conceal. He was a tall, broad shouldered, athletic young man, with a fine blonde head, and did not in the least resemble the family physician of Dorothy's infantile ailments.

"I have been expecting you," he remarked calmly; "won't you be seated?"

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"But I called to see Dr. Robinson," explained Dorothy, fully expecting him to claim the distinction.

"I am very sorry," replied the young man imperturbably: "I am Dr. Robinson's nephew, Jack Sawtelle. He was very uncertain about your keeping this appointment. In fact he went out, hoping to meet you elsewhere, but left me to receive you if you came, and gave me entire authority to act in his stead."

In the course of her life it is probable that Miss Dorothy had never experienced such a variety of emotions. That it was a case of mistaken identity, appeared plain; but how to account for her presence here, without betraying her name and her reason for ringing the bell, appeared a problem difficult of solution.

"I am sure there is some mistake," she stammered at length: "I am not the person Dr. Robinson expects. I simply wanted to consult him about a slight cold, and will call again."

"As my uncle is no longer a practising physician, I am sure that cannot have been your object." He drew himself up to his full height, which Dorothy found rather overwhelming, and adopted a sterner tone.

"Do be seated," he repeated; "this is a very serious matter and must be treated seriously. Your acquaintance with my unfortunate cousin is as well known to me in its details as to my uncle. Why try to deceive me?" as Dorothy made an attempt for a hearing.

"But I am not the person you think I am," she declared with spirit. "I am Miss Dempsey."

"Indeed! And to what reason does my uncle, an old bachelor, owe the pleasure of this visit to-day? You must excuse my ignoring the cold."

He made a quick, convincing gesture as she started, hesitated—and was lost.

"You see it is useless," he went on; "I must insist on your remaining until you have answered a few questions, but I beg that you won't force me to be more impolite than you can help."

"When will Dr. Robinson return?"

"In an hour or two, at the most. If you prefer waiting for him, that will be even better," and he drew forward one of the easiest chairs.

"But I can't stay here two hours," cried Dorothy, now thoroughly alarmed and continuing to stand uncompromisingly.

"Nor is there the slightest necessity for it. Perhaps, if I state the case, it will enable you to see that you can use the same freedom with me as with the doctor, and also, how little we require of you, provided you are honest, and how unpleasant the consequences may be if you evade. There have been great complications in two of the banks with which my cousin is connected, and actual theft has been committed. It has been proved past doubt at what hour the latter occurred, and suspicion has fallen in the highest places. My cousin will be implicated in the arrests unless it can be proved to the satisfaction of those interested that he was elsewhere at the time. By to-morrow, or at the farthest the next day, all London may know of it. For some strange reason he refuses to account for himself. Now, all we require is that you shall state under oath when and where you have seen him since Monday last."

"I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't wish to remain here any longer," protested Dorothy vehemently.

"Nonsense," replied Sawtelle, almost roughly, interposing himself between her and the door; "my uncle gave me a description of you before he left. The idea of your denying that you know Albert Twiller is absurd."

At the mention of the name Dorothy gave a little gasp of horror and amazement.

"Why, of course, I know him," she said unguardedly, and then, seeing too late that she was only strengthening his mistake, she sank into the nearest chair with a pitiful wail of distress, which did not help matters.

"Oh, this is perfectly dreadful!" she sobbed, forgetting her dignity and mopping her eyes with furtive dabs.

As for the blonde giant on the rug, he looked scarcely less uncomfortable and ill at ease.

"I don't see but that you will have to wait till the doctor comes. If I should let you go it would only mean publicity and an appearance at court and all sorts of complications, which you ought to be as anxious to avoid as we are, Miss McKinney."

"I am not Miss McKinney."

"Well, my uncle will know who you are, anyhow."

"No, he won't," thought Miss Dempsey, and relapsed into a damp and protracted silence.

"I wonder if you would believe me," she said at last impulsively, turning on him a pair of moist, indignant eyes, "if I told you exactly how I did happen to come here."

"I am dreadfully sorry. I presume I have made a mess of it," he replied irrelevantly: "perhaps we had better not try any more explanations until the doctor comes. You see, if I had known that you were in the least"—reddening perceptibly—"the least like what you are, I never should have attempted a conversation."

As Dorothy found nothing to reply to this, another half hour passed, reducing her to a state of nervousness that went far towards confirming Sawtelle in his suspicions.

At last to the infinite relief of both, a key sounded in the latch, and bowing politely at her averted head, Sawtelle hastened into the hall.

Already the doctor, a hale, hearty man of fifty, was divesting himself of his snowy overcoat, and on catching sight of his nephew he began to speak in a cheery, excited voice:

"Such a day, my boy! The jade escaped me in spite of everything and sailed on a Cunarder this noon. But that isn't the worst of it. No wonder Albert refused to say anything about her. He knew the whole thing would come out, and her testimony wouldn't be worth anything, for, you see, he has married her—married her, my dear boy, do you understand?"

As Sawtelle made no response, he glanced up hastily.

"Anything wrong?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Sawtelle, in a dramatic whisper of despair, "except that I have kept the prettiest girl I ever saw in a state of torture for two hours. She wouldn't explain who she was at first, and seemed so agitated that I never had a doubt about its being the McKinney woman. You said she was dark."

"Black, staring eyes and big as an Amazon."

"You didn't say that. This one is small and thoroughbred to the finger tips."

"Well, well, we must see about it."

And, accompanied by his anxious nephew, the doctor bustled into the room with an apologetic good will that somewhat disarmed the hauteur Dorothy was trying to assume.

"There has been a great mistake, my dear young lady, and one about which my nephew is deeply annoyed, but

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you mustn't blame him, because he was only following out my instructions, although mistaken in the person. And now if you will tell me to what I owe the honour of this visit, I shall be very glad if I can retrieve in any way the discomfort you have undergone."

Thus brought to bay, nothing was left for Dorothy but to make full confession.

"I am Miss Dempsey—" she began, but was unceremoniously interrupted by the doctor.

"Not Julien Dempsey's daughter? I knew he left a widow and child. Bless me, what a coincidence! We were chums—old chums at Cambridge years ago—but go on, my child."

And then followed the whole ridiculous, mortifying tale, to which the doctor listened with open interest.

"I am glad you happened to come here," he said, quite approvingly when she had finished.

"And I hope you are going to exonerate me partially," entreated Sawtelle, who had been preparing his line of defence during the recital; "you can't fancy how humiliated I am or how tempted I was to believe you. If you hadn't acknowledged your acquaintance with poor Twiller I should have weakened at the end."

"I do know Mr. Twiller, but the acquaintance is only a superficial one. I saw him last at Mrs. Lyle's ball, Wednesday evening, and sat with him some time in the conservatory. I was upset because what you told me seemed so terrible."

"But Mrs. Lyle herself mentioned to me that he was not in the house ten minutes," interposed the doctor; "I think she was upset. She fancied him for one of her girls, and now he has thrown himself away—poor Albert!"

"Oh, I know how that happened. He told me all about it. He was going home with a Mr. Green, and after he had made his adieux, Mr. Green decided to remain, so he sat out a dance with me, and finally went off without waiting for him."

"And do you know what time that was?" inquired the doctor eagerly.

"About a quarter or half-past one, when my partner for the cotillon came up. We began to dance it about that time."

"Could you swear to it on paper?"

"Why, yes; certainly."

"Then," shouted the doctor triumphantly, "he is vindicated, whether he explains or not. This will satisfy the directors, and they will drop proceedings where he is concerned. They know already that he is not guilty. It is as plain as daylight to me now. He didn't remember the exact time he left the Lyles, and thinking he was with this woman he has married, didn't want to attract our attention to her."

"And now, if you please, I should like to go home," remarked Miss Dempsey in a pathetic tone.

"Of course, my poor child, immediately. Jack, call a cab. I will go with you myself and see your mother; also get your signature, if you will be so kind. It will straighten the affair out wonderfully. Verily, truth is stranger than fiction!"

As Dorothy swept from the room, Sawtelle made a brave, if ineffectual attempt to attract her attention, but, as she steadily refused to be aware of his presence, his conscience permitted him to retain a small, soaked wad which was easily concealed in the palm of his hand. Subsequent events have led us to believe—so tender were his ministrations and pressures between the volumes of a new set of Ruskin—that in course of time it became less like a rag and more like a respectable handkerchief.

It is now over a year since these events occurred, and we hear that the article in question, together with a number of other worldly goods, is to be delivered to its rightful owner. How it all came about, those who have not begun their love affairs with a little animosity will never be able to conjecture, but we have it direct from the lips of the round and ever rubicund Carey himself:

"The latest engagement, my deah fellah, is Miss Dempsey's to a person named Sawtelle. Why, they say he has never been to a big night in his life!"

MARY GOLDING.

NINA AND GUGUSSE.

GUGUSSE, the favourite of the Winter Cirque, which stood in the shadow of the Kremlin, in Moscow, Russia, was not a handsome fellow. He had nei her the wit of the clown, the grace of the chariot driver, nor the versatility of the ringmaster, yet he was more popular with the Muscovites than all the three together. He owed his popularity a good deal to nature, who had sent him into the world equipped with an enormous head, large, fanlike ears, and a hunchback balanced upon slender legs, which bowed beneath their burden. He was the king of the dwarfs and the idol of the mob—for, to a mob, grace, wit and strength are nothing compared with hideous deformity.

Yet he was a man. He had passions like other men. He had a heart within his bony body as capable of human affection as that possessed by any of the public who applauded his tricks. And this heart he had thrown at the feet of Mlle. Nina, daughter of Adolphe, the equilibrist, the handsomest horsewoman in the circus.

When she appeared at the circus for the first time he was dazzled by her beauty. She danced into the ring in a cloud of gauze, among which spangles glittered like diamonds. A white rose, suspended from pearly teeth, contrasted with the rich red of her cheeks and coils of jet black hair, which streamed luxuriantly down to her waist. She was proudly, insolently beautiful, and the dwarf—whom the whim of a circus manager had taken from the cobbler's lapstone—was completely dazzled by the sight of such radiant loveliness.

As time went on the star dropped from the sky. The distance between them grew less and less as the illusion faded from his eyes. Every morning he used to see the dazzling beauty of the previous night in a dirty morning wrapper, patching her scanty wardrobe as she watched the pot boil in the open air. He began to talk

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with her, and then he began to dream, and in his dreams he saw Nina walking by his side, radiant with happiness.

Nina laughed at his gibes, screamed at his jokes and shouted "Encore, Gugusse!" when the love-stricken drawf made some grotesque movement, which, he hoped, would be interpreted as an exhibition of affection. The fair horsewoman occasionally caressed him as she would a dog. He was less than a dog in the eyes of the circus people. Jealous of his popularity, they cuffed him whenever they met him, and the dwarf found it useless to protest.

One evening he told Nina that he loved her. The girl stared at him a moment as if she had not heard aright, and then burst into a fit of laughter. Gugusse frowned, and drew himself up to the full height of his little figure, hoping perchance to impress her. Then he told her how he had loved her from the moment he first saw her, and how life was impossible without her regard.

Every word the dwarf uttered was like a jest to the merry-hearted girl. She sat in her chair and shook with the exuberance of mirth. Gugusse stepped forward and took one of her white, plump hands in his horny palm. Nina jumped up with a gesture of disgust, drew her hand away, and struck the dwarf a blow in the face.

A few hours later the circus rang with cheers as Gugusse entered. But the dwarf had no heart for his work that night, and he was hissed from the ring.

The next day the circus bills bore the imposing announcement:

"Unparalleled Novelty. Stupendous Attractions. The Tragedy of Usande; or, the Martyred Maiden. Mlle. Nina and Gugusse."

At seven o'clock the house was crowded. The usual exercises took place—tight rope, trapeze, horizontal bar—but they passed almost unnoticed. The people were waiting for the promised tragedy. They wanted to see the white-robed maiden devoured by the bear.

At last Gugusse and Nina entered the ring, and the pent-up excitement of the crowd found vent in cheers. Nina was bewitchingly beautiful in her white toga, over which fell tresses of rich, dark hair. She looked like the white-souled martyrs of old, for whom the stake had no terrors. She advanced to the centre of the ring, and Gugusse, looking as hideous as the headsman of the Restoration, bound her securely to the post. Nina clasped her hands together, and lifted her large eyes skyward in an attitude of prayer.

Gugusse disappeared and re-entered the ring with a tame bear, which had been his playfellow since he left his Polish home. He held the animal by the ear, and as the brute struggled and growled menacingly, the people applauded to the echo.

They watched Gugusse approach the maiden, and heard some words uttered, which they took to be an appeal for her recantation. In reality Gugusse was murmuring a passionate declaration.

"Nina, I love you. Have pity on me. Can you not hear me? Have pity on me or I will let Biska fly at you. I have made him drink brandy, I have beaten him, and this morning I stole his meat from him. He is hungry; he is mad; he will tear you to pieces. Will you be mine?"

Nina shook her head with a gesture of impatience.

"Nina! Nina! I am a man—I have a right to love you. I love you with my whole soul. I cannot live without your love. Be mine! Do not make me desperate. Ah! you shake your head. You will not! You despise me. I know it. You shall pay dearly for it now!"

As he finished speaking the dwarf bent down and unmuzzled the furious brute, which pawed the ground viciously at his feet. Nina turned pale. There was desperation in the dwarf's face—there was murder in his eyes. Her cheeks blanched with terror, and from her lips came the cry:

"Help! help! help!"

With a rapid movement Gugusse unmuzzled the bear, and the famished animal dashed past him, sprang upon the helpless girl and rent her with his claws.

The scene was so realistic, so strikingly rendered, that the audience applauded until the circus was filled with a deafening roar. They little knew that a tragedy was being enacted, and thought it was part of the "business" when a beautiful head dropped down and blood spurted from the white, unclothed arm.

What passed just then in the mind of the wretched creature who stood watching the horrible sight? Was he conscious of his infamy? Was he seized with pity at the sight of so much youth and beauty being ruthlessly torn to pieces? Did he wish to undo what he had done?

No one can tell, but just as the bear was planting his cruel claws upon the white shoulders of the half-conscious girl, the dwarf sprang forward and seized the brute in his muscular arms. With a mighty effort he pulled the bear off his victim and flung him to the ground.

The passion which famine and excitement had aroused in the bear caused him to turn with furious force upon his master.

As they rolled over together in the sawdust, the bear caught the dwarf in a terrible embrace.

There was a cracking of bones, and before the people belonging to the circus could run to his aid the infuriated beast had planted his fangs into his neck.

And the crowd, little suspecting that a grim tragedy had taken place before their eyes, jumped on their seats and howled out, amid a storm of applause:

"Encore, Gugusse! Encore, Gugusse!"

B. HAGELL.

100,000 PRIZES.

A PRIZE FOR EVERY COMPETITOR.

1	Prize of	ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.
1	„	FIFTY POUNDS.
1	„	TWENTY POUNDS.
5,000	Prizes of	Handsome Watches.
5,000	„	Ladies' Companions.
5,000	„	Sporting Knives.
5,000	„	Hair Brushes.
5,000	„	Hand Mirrors.
5,000	„	Silver Brooches.
5,000	„	Gold-Plated Pencil-cases.
5,000	„	Silver Bangles.
5,000	„	Penknives.
5,000	„	Pen and Pencil Boxes (3 deckers.)
10,000	„	Paint Boxes.
10,000	„	Boxes of Dominoes.
10,000	„	Pearl and Porcupine Penholders.
10,000	„	Compasses.
10,000	„	Boxes of Crayons.
20	Prizes of	ONE POUND each.
20	„	TEN SHILLINGS each.

From now until November 25th a coupon will appear on the front page of cover of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES (May 27th), SHORT STORIES (May 13th), and PASTIMES (May 13th). To the person who collects the greatest number of these coupons and sends them to us on a date we shall specify later, we will give the sum of One Hundred Pounds; to the collector of the second greatest number we will give Fifty Pounds, and so on until the whole 100,043 prizes have been awarded.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

This is the only competition that has ever been devised in which every competitor will get a prize.

All the articles enumerated above are of the best make and well worth possessing, therefore no prize will be given to any person who sends fewer than 200 coupons.

The prizes altogether will cost us about £10,010.

Ask any friend of yours who reads our papers to give you his coupons.

The Competition will run for twenty-nine weeks. If the members of your family take in "P.W.," "H.N.," "S.S.," and "Pastimes," and you collect the coupons from each, this will give you 114 coupons. You can easily obtain from your friends the balance to make up the 200, in which case you will be certain of getting a prize.

A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss fire. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same your 200 coupons would win you £100.

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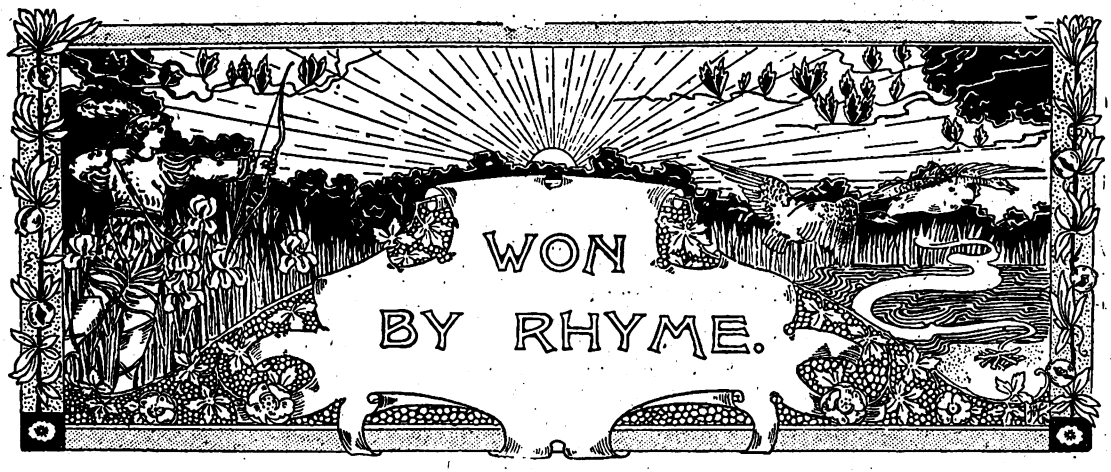


HER name was Potwattle, Polly Potwattle. I loved her madly; I hoped she loved me—but of that I was not so sure. She was divine; at least, I thought so. and I know my hated rival, Jack Maudle, was of a similar opinion. She had a father, and alas! a mother, to say nothing of her brother, Peter, who had a pleasing habit of borrowing half-crowns and promptly forgetting to repay them.

I did not mind this very much, as I thought the pleasure of seeing her was worth half-a-crown every time, but it got monotonous—I mean the half-crown borrowing.

My rival had been going it heavily lately, taking her (my Polly) to concerts, Sunday-school treats, and those sort of things, until I felt bad—desperate, verging on insanity. Something must be done, and at once. I must take decisive action. I must outwit my rival. I must, must! I must propose. Yes, that's it. I must propose to-morrow. Ah!

Yes, I am decided. I must propose to-morrow, but how—how shall I address my loved one? Shall I speak to her myself, or shall I let the penny post do it for me? And yet it seems a cold-blooded way to determine such a warm question. Ah! I have it; poetry—poetry. Oh! shades of Byron, cast thy mantle round me—cast, I say, thy mantle of inspiration around my unworthy shoulders, and let me address my adored, my divine and angelic Polly Potwattle, in thine own glorious and immortal language.

I got a pen and some ink; I took off my coat, bathed my head, sat down, and commenced:

> My dear Miss Potwattle, you'll see
> By this note that I'm writing to thee
> And I wish just to say, if you please,

Um! not bad for a start.

> That I love you far better than——

Um! what's a rhyme to please, please, please? For the life of me I couldn't think of anything but cheese. and it would be but a poor compliment to say I loved her better than cheese, for I don't like cheese, and my brother doesn't like cheese, and, in fact, none of our family like cheese.

No, that would not do at all. I got desperate. I thought of my hated rival, Maudle. I writhed in agony, beads of perspiration broke out upon my brow, and a mighty anger filled my soul as I imagined him at that moment with my Polly, seeking to win her love by traducing my name. In a moment of inspiration I seized my pen, and dashed off the following:

> My dear Miss Potwattle, perhaps you will see,
> On receiving this note, that it is from me.
> I want just to say that I love you far better
> Than I can express in the space of this letter.
> I love you, my angel, far better than life,
> Will you be my darling, my own little wife?
> Should your love be engaged, my rival I'll throttle
> For daring to love my own Polly Potwattle.

This was grand. This expressed my sentiments to perfection, I went to bed and in the morning concluded to go to the house, drop it in the letter-box and then run away.

I shaved, but was so nervous that my face looked like a miniature battle-field when I had finished. I dressed myself very neatly, and had no breakfast.

'Twas Saturday. I went down to my place of business, obtained a holiday, and then set off for her home—the home of my Polly—my wife that was to be.

I reached her street. I could see Potwattle Lodge, with its green railings, and then my heart failed me. Supposing someone were to open the door while I was doing the deed. Horror! I walked past the house. All was quiet. I walked past again, but my courage had not returned. For two mortal hours I did sentry business before the door of my adored one. At last in desperation I resolved to knock and make a formal call.

While knocking at the door I noticed that half-a-dozen of the green palings were broken, and the flower-bed was ploughed up as if a small avalanche had been having a picnic in the garden, and then the door was opened by the servant.

Upon seeing me, she smiled, I don't know why, but she did. Not a pleasant smile, but one that partook of a sardonic nature.

"Is—er—Miss Potwattle in?"

"Did you say Mrs. Potwattle?"

"Yes—er—that is to say—er—no—I mean Mr. Potwattle; but it doesn't matter, I will call again."

"Walk inside, sir. Mr. Potwattle is in, sir. Kindly step into the drawing-room."

I obeyed tremblingly, and when there a thought struck me—a brilliant thought. Why not trust this humble handmaiden with my precious note, ah! why not? I looked at her. She smiled. I smiled. We both smiled. I found half-a-crown and my note, and asked her if she

would execute a little commission for me. She would. Again she smiled, significantly this time, and then left the room laughing outright.

Now, why should she be so merry? I looked at myself in the the glass. I was all right. No smut on my nose. Collar right. Tie straight. Everything in order. Then the door opened, and someone entered. 'Twas her brother, Peter. Ugh! more half-crowns!

"'Ello, old boy! Glad to see yer, my pippin. Just going down to the club for 'arf an hour. Why, what's up? Yer do look glum. Lost anything on the Derby?"

I replied that I was all right, and had lost nothing on the Derby.

"Glad ter 'ear it, 'cause I was just wantin' ter borrow 'arf-a-crown for a day or two. Can you oblige me, old chap?"

I meekly handed him one, intimating at the same time that an I O U was unnecessary, as I had a small bundle at home.

"Thanks, old man. But yer are looking seedy."

To change the subject I inquired the cause of the broken palings and the ploughed flower-bed outside.

"Haw! haw! haw! such a lark. Yer know Jack Maudle? Him as was such spoons on our Polly. Well, he came last night to propose for her, and that's where the guv'nor kicked him off the top step—awful lark, wasn't it?"

I replied that "it was a most excruciating joke," and smiled funereally.

"Well, ta-ta, old boy. I hear the mater coming—bye-bye."

When he had gone I sighed deeply. I felt warm, very warm, but before I could get any hotter, Mrs. Potwattle was in the room.

She would weigh, I should think, about two hundred pounds. She hadn't got a right "h" in her constitution, and invariably substituted a "k" for any word that usually ended with a "g." But what of that? She was her mother—the mother of my soul's adoration. Hers was the hand that had fed my adored one through infancy, and nursed her through the measles. What matter if her grammar was faulty, and her pronunciation execrable? She was her mother. Surely, she could express herself in any manner she liked, so long as she made herself intelligible, and I can tell you that she was an extremely plain-spoken woman—rather too plain-spoken, I thought, at times; but, ha! ha! no matter, she is in the room.

"Good mornink, Mr. Flockintop; and to what must I subscribe the honour of a visit at so early an hour of the mornink?"

I remarked that it was a very fine day, and she replied that "she was thankful to say that she had heyes, and could see so much for herself."

This was not encouraging, and I ventured to remark that she "was looking well."

"Yes, I ham well."

Whew! I was warm. How could I come to the object of my visit? I then ventured to hope that Miss Polly was well.

"Yes, she is well."

"And Mr. Potwattle."

"Got the gout."

At this time I was in such a state of fever that I began to think a certain place must be cool compared with me. At last, with the courage of despair, I opened the question.

"I have known Miss Potwattle a long time now."

"Hindeed!"

"And the fact has also been forced upon my observation, madam, that your daughter would make a wife fit for an emperor."

"Lor! You don't say so? And now, Flockintop, is there hanythink you 'aven't noticed regardink my darter? Hif not, what may be your intentions?"

"My intentions, madam, are to offer myself as a suitor for your daughter's hand."

"Ho! hindeed; and what place are you hemperor hov?"

I was forced to confess that at present I was without that dignity, but added that I was in receipt of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

"And my darter, sir, spends halmost as much as that 'erself."

"But, madam, surely one hundred and fifty pounds a year would keep your daughter and myself comfortably; besides, I have expectations."

"Ho, you've hegspegtations, 'ave you?"

I then mentioned that I had an uncle in a bad state of health, and as I was his favourite nephew, I thought that it was highly probable that my name would be found in his will.

"Ho, then all you 'ave to hoffer my darter is the paltry sum of £150 and all your hegspectations 'ang on a huncle with a diseased liver?"

I intimated that such was the case, and Mrs. Potwattle then declared that "sooner than doom 'er darter to heternal misery such as I had presumed to hoffer 'er, she would rather see 'er gettink cramps in 'er jints by sitting as a hartis' model for heightpence a hour."

I was pretty cool by this time. Somehow, this woman's cold-blooded calculations cast a damper on my spirits, but I fired up for a final effort.

"Madam, I am quite aware that at present I can't offer your daughter such a home as she now occupies, but I can confidently assure you, madam, that should I be fortunate enough to gain that angel's hand, nothing shall be wanting on my part to make her life one of peace, joy, and happiness. There is an old saying, the truth of which you cannot doubt, that 'what will keep one will keep two,' and if, after a trial, we find that such is not the case, I will willingly forego my share."

"Ho! and you'll live on hair, I suppose?"

"Madam, consider. Here are two hearts bound together in the holy bonds of love; would yours be the hand to rend them asunder? Consider, madam, you were young yourself—once."

"Sir!!!"

"Oh, yes; confound it all, but you must have been!"

"Hif it is your hintention to hinsult me, sir, Hi will send Mr. Potwattle to you."

As soon as she had bounced out of the room, I sank down upon a chair in a state of abject exhaustion.

I hardly had time to recover, when I heard the step of a heavy boot, followed by the muffled sound of the gouty member—then, and not till then, did I fully realise my truly dangerous position.

However, seizing the poker and bracing my back firmly against the mantel-piece, I resolved to sell my life dearly.

The ominous clang came nearer, and then Mr. Potwattle's ruddy face, followed by his body and gout, protruded into the room.

I hardly know what I expected, as I stood stiff as starch beside the fireplace, and before I saw him shadowy visions of pistols and bowie-knives chased each other through my over-wrought brain. When, however, he entered the

room, and I saw his kind old face, and, despite the pain of the gout, the merry twinkle lurking about the corner of his eyes, I suddenly melted, dropped the poker with a crash, and hastened to place a couple of chairs for the reception of my adored's father.

"Well, Flookintop, my boy, what's all this about, eh? Been having a bout with the missis?"

I remarked that I had unintentionally aroused Mrs. Potwattle's anger.

"Ah, she's a bit out just now. That scamp Maudle came here last night and wanted our Polly, confound him! And, by gad! he got so abusive that I had to kick him out."

I ventured to ask what Miss Polly thought of the occurrence.

"Oh, Polly? She, of course, didn't like one of her admirers being hurt, and was rather down for a bit."

My spirits fell about fifty degrees.

"But she's all right now. It strikes me," he added, looking over my head, "that she is rather partial to somebody else."

My heart fell another twenty-five degrees.

"Som—somebody else?" I faltered

"Aye, somebody else. There is always somebody else, and I rather like the chap myself."

I groaned.

"Why, what's the matter with the lad? Eh, you young dog, why, confound you, what are you groaning at?"

I shook my head dismally and replied that, at one time, I had hoped to be favoured—blessed—with the hand of Miss Polly, but since there was a suitor whom the lady and her parents regarded favourably, I thought it time that I should remove myself from Potwattle Lodge, and then I murmured something about going abroad, and burying myself in some secluded spot far from the haunts of man or woman; but before I could get to the part about a welcome but untimely grave, I was interrupted by a round oath from Mr. Potwattle.

"Why, confound the fool, what does he mean?"

"Eh!"

"Why, you idiot, do you mean to say you don't know?"

I again murmured: "Eh, don't know what?"

"Why, don't you know that you are the man?"

"What!" I shouted. "I?"

"Why, yes, you. Didn't you talk to the missis about marrying Polly?"

"Yes, but——"

"But what, confound the lad! You like Polly and Polly likes you."

"But Mrs. Potwattle?"

"Oh, never mind the missis; she likes you all right, only she's too put out to show it."

I rushed over to him, kicked his gouty foot, and grasping his hand, worked his arm up and down like a pump-handle, and began to talk affection and my inability to make settlements.

"Settlements! Bosh! What other settlements can a girl want than a fine young man? You leave the settlements to me."

At this moment Mrs. Potwattle entered the room, expecting, I suppose, to find me in three pieces.

After getting over her astonishment at seeing us shaking hands so violently, we talked the matter over quietly, and the conference ended by my receiving a smacking kiss from my angel's mother.

ALFRED MATTS.

THE TRAMP'S DOG.

"HERE, Ralph! Ralph! Hi, you scamp! Come back here, sir! There, he's gone! Off for two or three days' tramp again. Beg pardon, sir! I didn't see you. I was that busy calling the dog I reckon I nearly walked over you. The matter, sir? Well, it's that dog Ralph. You heard me call him I dare say. A grander old fellow you couldn't find in a day's travel, but he has one bad habit. Most humans have more than that, and I ain't sure in my own mind that he ain't human.

"The habit? Well, it's just this: He will follow every blessed old tramp as passes here and keep following 'em, sometimes for two or three days. He's a queer one. Did you notice him just now? Didn't see him? Well, he keeps just far enough behind the fellows so they won't drive him back, sniffin' along and kind of casting his eye back to let me know he's hearing me, but not heedin' me. Just the same way he acts every time he goes off. He'll be back all right when he does come, and he's been acting that way ever since I've had him. 'Stolen?' Why, sir, I don't believe the one's livin' could steal him or fasten him up ever so tight he couldn't get back ever since, an' a right queer way I got him, too.

"Is he mine? Well, yes, in one way; an' then no, in another. It was a queer story, anyway.

"Tell it, sir? Well, if I had time I might. Ah, thank you, sir! A fine gentleman like you can afford to be generous.

"Now let me see. As near as I remember, it was June, two years ago, as I came downstairs rather early one morning to light the fire for my old woman. She warn't very strong then; the youngster there was only a couple of months old, an' as I was gettin' the things all handy for her to get breakfast. When she came down the fire was lightin' and the kettle singin'—for joy of seein' her, I'm thinkin'.

"Mollie was always a great one for fresh air; so as soon as she saw that everythin' was goin' right in the kitchen, she walks to the front door, turns the key an' opens it.

"Well, quick as a flash she came runnin' back to me with her face kind of white an' scared.

"'Oh, Jim, come out here to the door! Quick!' says she.

"An' when I followed her, blessed if I don't see the rummest sight I ever did, an' there I stood, starin' like an ape.

"You see, these seats on the porch are rather comfor'ble to sit on, an' with the vines hangin' over this way makes it 'most as shut in an' quietlike as a bedroom; then the posts here an' at the corners form good rests for the back. Well, anyhow, good or bad, right here, a-leaning back in the most uncomf'blest way, was the trampiest looking tramp I ever saw, sound asleep. An' on the seat beside him, with his head on the man's lap, was the dandiest setter I ever expect to see. A vallyble dog, sir, too, as I knew soon as I set eyes on him. I always know a good dog, being rather in the sportin' line myself, an' this was a genuine Gordon setter.

"Well, sir, I suppose I must have said somethin' with surprise for to wake them up. The dog turned the solem'est eyes round to me, askin' me not to make so much noise, an' the man, all rags an' tatters, yawned an' set up. An' then, seein' Mollie right behind me, I'll be shot, sir, if he didn't stand up, take off his piece of a hat to her, an' begin to apolergise for settin' on our doorstep. Said he'd been overcome with fateek. My eye! For the manners of him I could hardly believe he weren't a swell cove, dressed in the latest fashion, with a full-blooded stepper at the gate waiting for him.

"I know I must have stared at him considerable, but, bless you, Mollie didn't spend no time a-starin' till she'd asked him into the kitchen, an' when the breakfast was ready she gave him, an' his dog, too, a good one.

"His feet were blistered with walkin' in shoes that left half of his feet outdoors, an' half in; an' as he could scarcely take a step we made him stay with us a day or so till they got better; but he couldn't bear it, an' the only reason, I think, was that he was afraid of burdenin' us. But, Lord! He did as much for us as we did for him, I'll be bound. He filled the yard with kindlin's, an' I believe he'd a chopped all the wood in the village if Mollie hadn't seen his hands all blistered an' bleedin'. That give him away sure. 'A gentleman born,' says I to myself when I see those hands.

"Then nothin' would do but Mollie must doctor and bandage them up for him. An' while she was doin' it she heard a sound like a child tryin' not to cry, an' he just bends down an' kisses her hand, an' then he says, kind of low and choked like, more like a groan than words, 'Oh, mother!'

"An' the way the little lad took to him was a caution. A mite like he was—no sense at all; only puckered up his face and cried when I went near him. He'd smile up in Robert's face (that was what he told us to call him), an' hold on to his finger like he was his nurse.

"Now, to be sure, sir, three days don't seem much in a life, an' you'll maybe think it foolish the store we set by both man an' dog before that time was passed. Ralph would lay down beside the baby's cradle, an' nothin' would move him till his master left the room. Then he'd get up an' shake himself, as if it was time to go on, an' he was goin'.

"Mollie said he was human, an' if ever a soul gets into an animal's body—I hear there's folks as think so—there was a good soul inside of Ralph.

"Yes, we all liked Ralph, an' Robert even more. The fact is he was a real gentleman, that was plain enough, brought down as low as he was by Lord only knows what. But a true gentleman, an' I know the right kind when I see them. He never let on for one moment, though, a single word about himself but once, an' that was the last evenin' he was here.

"The dog was sittin' beside him, with his head restin' on Robert's knee, when I says, kind of sudden like:

"'I bet Ralph's a very vallyble dog, Robert.'

"'Yes, yes,' he says, sort of slow. 'Too vallyble,' stroking Ralph's head with a lovin' hand. While the dog looked at him with just as much love. 'Twas the humanest eyes you would ever see, sir.

"'He's worth a great deal of money,' he said again, after a moment's thinking. 'I am very sorry for it sometimes. I've been in many hard straits at times, an' I've been afraid—aye, afraid of myself—that I'd be tempted to sell him. Not while I was myself, old fellow, you understand, but when I was the brute I sometimes am.'

"By George, sir! you wouldn't believe it, I dare say, but I'd take my affydavy that dog looked up, sort of sad-like, and shook his head.

"To make the story short—though, all told, it was not so very long—when we came downstairs the next morning, Ralph lay on the floor guardin' his master's stick; but his master wasn't nowhere round.

"Tell me the dog didn't know! He knew as well as we did why it was done; that the master he loved an' who loved him had left him, but he had been told to watch the stick, an' with the saddest eyes and droopin' he lay there all day long. An' I truly believe if we hadn't got the stick away from him and burnt it he'd 'a' been watchin' it yet.

"An' his master? Yes, sir; gone—clean gone. An' we've never heard a word of him since. Ungrateful? No, sir; I don't take it so. I think he couldn't trust himself with the dog he loved when he was himself, you see, an' so he left him where he knew he would be well taken care of. Yes, that's the way I see it, anyhow. An' then he got so far away before the dog would quit watching that the scent was lost for poor Ralph. But he ain't never give up. Not a day, sir!

"Do? Well, there's not a tramp comes past here—an' the worse-looking they are the wilder he is to get after them, sniffin' at their tracks, and then his tail will drop so disappointed like, yet he'll keep on an' follow 'em for a day, and maybe three days, till he gets sure he ain't coming to his master, when he'll come back. Seems to me as if he kind of thought they might know him. How does he find out they don't? Bless you, sir, don't ask me, but dogs know a heap more than people think.

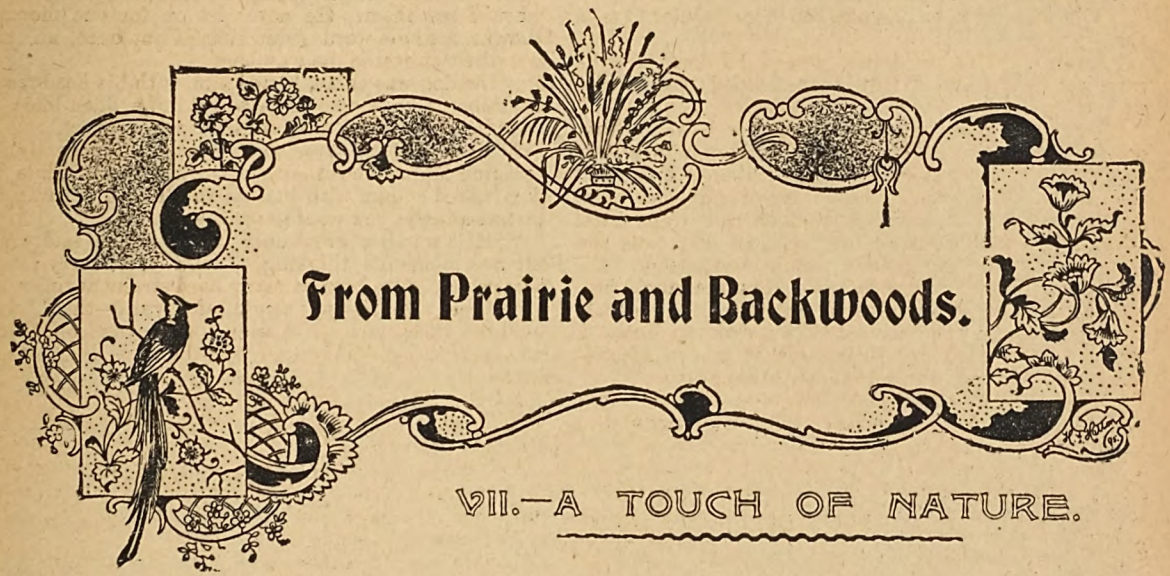
"He ought 'a' been named Rover, for he's been in more different places round here than I have, an' always turns up all right when he's settled the matter.

"Why! ain't that him now a-sniffin' along the other road? Of course it is. Well, now, how'd he get over there I wonder; it seems as if he was scentin' somethin', don't it?

"Hi, Ralph! Ralph! Ah! there he comes, a-boundin' along towards us just as he used to go for his master. Looks as if he thought he could find him, sure. See now! Ain't he a beauty?

"Here, Ralph! Good old fellow! Come here, sir. Eh! What! Straight for you, sir, he's gone, without a look for me! All over you in a minute! A fine gentleman like you! What! you, you, sir! Robert! Great Scott! An' Ralph knew you? Well, well: I give in. Dogs is human!"

I. J. Freshman.



From Prairie and Backwoods.

VII.—A TOUCH OF NATURE.

"If thar is one thing," said the old cattleman, with the strain of affection and respect in his tone, "which endears this yere Jack Booth to me, speshul, it is the calm, uncompromising way he lines up on what he deems his dooty.

"But where Jack shines exceedin' is when you opens a new game onto him. It is just beautiful as a mere example to men, to see the confidence with which that Jack gets a stack of chips an' sets in agin it. One hot afternoon, Enright an' Doc Peets is away about some cattle or something, but the rest of us is holdin' down the camp, we're sorter hangin' an' revolvin' 'round the post office, awaitin' for Old Monte an' the stage. Here she comes, final, a-rattlin' an' a-creakin', that old drunkard Monte a-crackin' of his whip, the six hosses on the canter, an' the whole business puttin' on more dog than a Mexican officer of revenoo. When the stage drors up, Old Monte throws off the mail bags, gets down an' opens the door, but nobody gets out.

"'Well, I'm a coyote!' says Monte, a heap disgusted, 'wharever is the female?'

"Then we all peers into the stage an' thar's jest a baby, with maybe a ten-months' start down this vale of tears, inside an' no mother nor nuthin' along. Jack Booth, jest as I says when I begins, reaches in an' gets him. The baby ain't sayin' nuthin' an' sorter takes it out in smilin' on Jack.

"'He knows me, for a hundred dollars,' says Jack, mighty ecstatic. 'I'm an Apache if he ain't allowin' he knows me. Wharever did you get him, Monte?'

"'Give me a drink,' says Monte, trackin' along into the Early Bird; 'this yere makes me sick.' After he gets about four fingers of carnation under his belt he turns in an' explains as how the mother starts along in the stage all right enuf from Tueson. The last time he sees her, he says, is at the last station back some twenty miles in the hills, at dinner, an' he s'poses all the time she's inside along of her progeny until jest now.

"'I don't reckon,' says Old Monte, lookin' gloomy like, 'as how that womern is aimin' to saw this yere infant on to the stage company none?'

"'Don't addle your whiskey frettin' about the company,' says Booth, a-settin' the kid on the bar, while we all crowds in for a look at him; 'the camp'll play this hand for the infant, an' the company ain't goin' to be in it a little bit.'

"'I wish Enright and Peets was yere,' says Cherokee Hall, 'to be heard hereon, 'cause I shore deems this a grave occasion. Yere we finds ourselves possessed of an onexpected infant of tender years, an' the question nacheral enuf now is, whatever'll we do with it?'

"'Let's maverick it,' says Dan Boggs, who is a mighty good sort of a man, but onthinkful.

"'No,' says Cherokee, 'its mother'll come hoppin' along to-morry a-yellin', you see! This yere is sabed all easy enuf. This old sot Monte has jest done drove off an' left her planted some'rs up the trail, an' she'll come along shore in time.'

"'Meantime,' says Booth, 'the infant's got to be took care of, to which dooty I volunteers. Thar's a tenderfoot a-sleepin' in the room back of the Red Light, an' he's that 'feminate an' effect he's got a sure-nuf bed an' some gooseha'r pillers; which the same I do yereby confiscate to public use to take care of this yearlin'. Is the sentiment pleasin'?'

"'Jack's scheme is right,' says Boggs, 'An' for that matter he's allers right. Let the shorthorn go sleep under a mesquite bush; it'll do him good a whole lot; for sech is life in the far West.'

"'I'm some dobersome of this play,' says Cherokee. 'Small infants is mighty mysterious people, an' thar ain't no livin' man was ever onto their game an' able to foresee their needs yet. Do you allow you can take care of this young one, Jack? Be you equal to it?'

"'Take care of a small baby like this,' says Jack, plenty scornful, 'as ain't weighin' twenty pounds averdupois? Well, it'll be some funny now if I can't! I could take care of him if he's four times as big. All I asks is for you all to stand by in crisises, an' back the play, an' you can go make side bets we'll come out winners on the deal.'

"'I ain't absolute shure,' says the postmaster, 'bein' some out of practice with infants myself, but jedgin' by his lookin' smooth an' silky, I offers fifty dollars even he ain't weaned yet; an' we leaves it to the mother when she comes.'

"'I won't bet none on his bein' weaned complete,' says Booth, 'but I'll hang up fifty dollars even he drinks outen a bottle as successful as Old Monte.'

"'I'll jest go you once,' says the postmaster, 'if I lose. Its fifty dollars even he grows contemptuous at a bottle an' disdains it.'

"Well, we all talks it over an' decides Booth is to nurse the infant, an' at once proceeds to make a procession for the tenderfoot's bed, which he resigns without a struggle. Cherokee Hall an' Boggs then goes over to the corral an' lays for a goat, which was a mother, to milk it a whole lot. The goat was mighty reluctant an' refooses to enter into the spirit of the thing, but they makes their points right along, an' after a frightful time, which now an' then demands the assistance of a large part of the camp, comes back with more'n a pint.

"'That's all right,' says Booth. 'Now go out an' tell the barkeep to give you a pint bottle. We'll have this yere game a-winning in two minutes.'

"So Booth gets his bottle and fills her up with goat's milk an' makes a stopper outen cotton cloth an' molasses for the young one to dror it through. About this time the infant sets up a yell an' ain't peaceful agin until Booth gives him his six-shooter to play with.

"'Which shows my confidence in him,' says Booth. 'There's only a few people left I care to pass my gun to.'

"Well, Booth gets along with him first rate, a-feedin' of him the goat's milk, which he goes for with avidity, tharby nettin' Booth fifty dollars from the postmaster. He has Boggs build a fire so he can keep the milk warm, an' is that earnest he don't go for no supper; jest has it brought to him.

"'Somebody'll have to ride herd on this yere foundling all night, I reckon,' says Boggs to Jack, when he's bringin' him things.

"'I s'pose, most likely, we will have to make the play thataway,' says Booth.

"'All right,' says Boggs, 'You know me an' Cherokee. We're in this any time you says.'

"So a passel of us continues along with Booth an' the infant, until maybe it's about second drink time in the night. The infant don't raise the war yell once—jest takes it out in goat's milk an' in laughin' an' playin' with Booth's gun.

"'Excuse me, gents,' finally says Booth, mighty dignified, 'but I've been figgerin' this thing an' I rather thinks it's time to put this yere young one to sleep. So if you all will now withdraw, I'll see how near I comes to bed'in' of him down for the night. Stay within whoopin' distance, though, so if he tries to stampede or takes to millin' I can have help.'

"So we all lones out an' leaves Jack an' the infant, an' turns in on faro an' poker an' similar devices which was bein' waged in the saloon.

"Maybe it's an hour when Jack comes in.

"'Boggs,' he says, 'jest step in an' play my hand a minute, while I goes over an' adjourns them frivolities in the dance hall. It looks like this yere camp was speshul tumultuous to-night.'

"Boggs does, an' Jack proceeds to the Bails House next door an' states the case.

"'I don't want to onsettle business,' he says, 'nor disturb the currents of trade, but this yere young one I'm responsible for, in back of the Red Light, gets that engaged in the sounds of these yere revels, it don't look like he's ever goin' to sleep none. So if you will jest call on the last waltz an' wind her up for to-night, it'll be regarded. The kid's mother'll shore be here in the mornin', which will alter the play all around an' matters can then go back to the old lines.'

"'Enuf said,' says Jim Hamilton, who runs the dance hall. 'You can gamble this dance house ain't layin' down none on a plain dooty, an' to-night's shindig closes right yere. All promenade to the bar. We'll take a drink on the house an' quit an' call it a day.'

"So then Jack comes back mighty grave with his cares, an' relieves Boggs, who's on watch, straddle of a chair, a-eyein' of the infant, who, a-settin' up agin a goose-ha'r piller, along of his goat's milk and Booth's gun, is likewise a-eyein' of Boggs.

"'He's a-way up good infant, Jack,' says Boggs, givin' up his seat.

"'You can bet your life he's a good infant,' says Jack, 'but it seems mighty like he don't aim' to turn in an slumber none. Maybe goat's milk is too invigoratin' for him, an' keeps him awake.'

"About another hour goes on an' out comes Jack into the saloon agin.

"'I don't aim to disturb you all,' he says, 'but, boys, if you'll jest close the games yere an' shet up the store, I'll take it as a personal favour. He can hear the click of the chips, an' it's too many for him. Don' go 'way—jest close up an' set' round quiet.'

"So we does as Jack says; closes the games an' shets up the camp, an' then sets round in our chairs an' keeps quiet a-waitin' for that infant to turn in. A half-hour later Jack comes out agin.

"'It ain't no use, gents,' he says, goin' back of the bar an' gettin' a big drink, 'that child is onto us an' won't have it. You can gamble, he's fixed it up himself he ain't goin' to sleep none to-night. I allow it's because he's among rank strangers, an' figgers it's a good safe play to stand watch for himself.'

"'I wonder couldn't we sing him to sleep?' says Cherokee Hall.

"'Nothin' agin makin' a try,' says Jack, some desperate, wipin' his lips after his drink.

"'S'pose we all goes an gives him "The Dyin' Ranger" an' "Sandy Land" for an hour or so, an' see?' says Boggs.

"So in we trails. Cherokee lays down on one side of the infant an' Booth on the other, an' the rest of us takes chairs an' sets 'round. We starts in an' sings him all we knows, an' we shorely keeps it up for hours; an' all the time that child a-settin' an' a-starin', sleepless as owls. The last I recollects is Boggs's voice in 'The Dyin' Ranger.'

With his saddle for a pillow,
An' his gun across his breast,
Far away from his dear old Texas,
We laid him down to rest.

"The next thing there's a whoop an' a yell outside. We all wakes up—all except the infant, who's wide awake all along—an' yere it is four o'clock in the mornin' an' the mother has come. Comes over from the last station on a speshul buckboard, where that old inebriate Monte drove off an' left her. Well, son, we was willin' an' glad to see her. An', for that matter, splittin' even, so was the kid."

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SEVENTH INSTALMENT.

A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY HEATHCOTE, who, for political reasons, is apprehensive of pursuit, leaves Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, and makes for the heart of Wales, where he has expectations of finding a sure refuge. Travelling among the Welsh mountains, Geoffrey narrowly escapes being trapped by a gang of thieves, and on a later occasion he joins in a fight against the same gang. Geoffrey then falls into the company of a hot-headed Welshman, who picks a quarrel. They fight, and Geoffrey, who has found more than his match, is saved by a woman, who is grateful to the refugee for having saved the life of her child. Suspicious characters gather round Geoffrey. Being mounted on a superior horse the refugee easily shakes off his wretched companions, and at a later period assists two ladies in escaping from a band of thieves. Geoffrey is hospitably entertained by a Welsh farmer, and on resuming this journey he encounters a handsomely dressed Welshman. The latter upbraids the English, and they fight with swords. At a critical moment the duel is stopped by the young girl whom Geoffrey had assisted, and who turns out to be no other than his own cousin. The refugee is welcomed by his uncle, with whom he stops. Geoffrey and his cousins Enid and Owain set out on an errand of mercy and are chased by "The Red Men," who attack the house and are ultimately repulsed.

Geoffrey, who goes in pursuit of them, is shot in the head from the house, and suspects his uncle of the deed. Six Red Men are captured and hanged, and Geoffrey incurs the hatred of his uncle's menials by pleading for their lives. The place becomes dangerous to him, and he leaves. Meanwhile, his uncle has extracted from his secret pocket an incriminating letter, with which he sends one of his men to the authorities. The man, however, is captured by Geoffrey and Ieuan Gwyllt, and taken by them to the stronghold of the Red Men. While watching Nant-y-Bryn Ieuan and Geoffry see some reinforcements arrive.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOUL PLAY.

THE next morning there was no sign of Ieuan, or, indeed, of any of the men about the place, and I saddled Whitesock and galloped off in the direction we had followed the previous day. I kept a sharp look-out as I rode over the grey, naked hills, but saw no sign of people abroad. I did not know when it was intended to beat up the quarters of the Red Men of the Dusk, and half-expected to meet scouting parties over any rise. But the mountain opened before me, mile after mile, bare and sombre and lifeless.

Within an hour I had ensconced myself among the boulders commanding a view of Nant-y-Bryn, and here I began a patient watch. I saw plenty of movement about the house, men coming and going, carrying water, and grooming horses out on the hillside before the gate, figures rambling idly, figures running busily, but among them no sign of the tall, straight form for which I looked.

Hours slipped slowly away, and I glanced at the sky and saw that the sun was at its zenith. I rubbed my dazzled eyes and turned them on Nant-y-Bryn again. A cluster of figures seemed moving in my direction through the bright fog which staring at the sun had spread before me. I shut my eyes for a few moments, then looked out eagerly. Yes, four people were walking up the hill, two and two, strolling carelessly, and Owain was one of the leading pair. They came slowly on, not heading directly towards me, but more in a line for the spinney below.

At some distance from the house they glanced back, and immediately began to walk briskly with the air of men carrying out a definite plan. From my perch I had the whole country below me, and in a moment I fancied I saw the meaning of it.

A dip in the hill had hidden them from the house, and there was now no need for them to assume a careless air. They were bent on something in which they wished to avoid interference, and knowing Owain as I did, I was half-assured what it was. I observed that they walked strictly two and two, and that there was no turning of heads as there would be were a general conversation going on.

In a short time, they passed out of my sight behind the further edge of the spinney, and I made down for the trees, leading Whitesock by the rein. I trod softly through the larches and peered out. It was exactly as I had fancied. Forty yards away the four figures were gathered on a level patch of turf. Owain and another young fellow about his own age had their coats already off and their naked swords in their hands.

His opponent and the two seconds were the young men whom I had seen riding with him on the previous evening, and I shook my head, as I thought how hot-blooded and foolish it all was. I am not one myself to always run away from the like invitations, but with such business on hand as rooting out the Red Men of the Dusk, it seemed to me a very ill time to be turning their weapons against each other.

It was true that I was biassed, for could I have enjoyed my way, I would never have had Owain go a yard from his sister until she stood in safer circumstances than the present. Yet I never dreamt of the bloody end to which matters were shortly to run, but waited to see one or other get a scratch sufficient to satisfy all parties. I have never known to this day what the quarrel was about, but that it was a trivial affair I am assured by the way the duel commenced, going forward for a time more like a calm fencing match than aught else.

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This was greatly to my satisfaction, for I felt certain that first blood would settle the affair, and I observed, too, that the seconds never offered to engage, as is commonly done, in case of a serious quarrel.

Yet the tingle and grate of cold steel had, before long, its customary maddening effect. It excited me even, as I stood in shelter of the larches; how much more the actual combatants! They gradually grew warmer, the lunges came faster and fiercer; I could hear their panting breaths at each swift bound and rebound; and the formal tilting swiftly merged into deadly combat.

I watched with all my eyes, longing to see Owain safely through it, and soon I heaved a sigh of relief. There was no question as to the better man, and I saw that Owain was completely master of his opponent's play. The latter began to give ground, and Owain followed steadily up. The losing man's second, a short, red-haired fellow, began to shout and scream in his excitement, seeming beside himself at the prospect of Owain's victory.

This strange conduct in a second caused me to view him more attentively, and I discovered a great likeness between him and the fighting man. I judged them, and I found afterwards that I had judged them rightly, to be brothers.

Lunge by lunge Owain drove his opponent back, and, suddenly engaging him more fiercely than ever plucked his sword from his grasp. The defeated swordsman gave a shrill, thin cry upon finding himself defenceless, put up his hands, and cowered.

The little red fellow gave a horrible yell like a madman, leapt in, whipping out his sword as he sprang, and drove it clean through Owain's body. My poor friend, already reaching forward, dropped on his face, blindly groping on the turf with his hands, and gasping out blood and faint groans.

For an instant he was the only moving figure. My heart stood still, and I was immovable under the shock and horror of such treachery. The murderer had held tightly to his weapon and Owain's fall had plucked it out again. He looked with a fascinated eye upon the blood slow dropping from the point as if he could scarce believe that he had struck the blow; his companions were rooted to their places. With a great bound my blood raced again through my veins. I burst through the trees and darted at full speed upon the holder of the dark and smoking sword. I was not a dozen yards from him when a great shout from the other second caused him to start and look round. He leapt aside and ran from me as nimbly as a hare. He was in light shoes and I in heavy riding-boots. I stopped and bent over Owain. The sword had been driven in under the arm-pit and had reached the heart. He was quite dead, his eyes already fixed and glazing. I closed them and stood up and drew off my boots.

"Who is this?" cried the duellist who had now picked up his weapon.

"The man who killed Owain," cried the red-haired murderer. "Do you take me?"

"We do," answered the other two.

I took his meaning also, and looked round upon Owain's second. It was clear that he considered it the best way out of the difficulty, for his sword was in his hand, and he was watching the movements of his companions, ready to close upon me with them.

Instinctively, they had spoken in English, which is used as a private language among the Welsh gentry, and so let me into their plot. They would take advantage of my appearance to slay me and represent me as Owain's murderer, righteously executed by them.

For a second my mind dwelt upon the thoughts of this story recited in Enid's presence, and backed up by the bodies of her lover and brother; then I looked about upon them in the grimmest, deadest earnest I ever felt in my life. I whipped off my coat and cast my sword belt loose. I fondled for an instant the hilt of my trusty blade, working my fingers round and round it in a tight, and yet tighter grip, then squared my shoulders and faced to my work.

I spoke no word to them. Names, were they never so truthful, were not to the purpose for the moment. Men, who could act as they were acting, would be little moved at hearing their deeds rightly described. I hoped to balance accounts with other coin.

No one had yet moved a step in my direction. I was ringed about on three sides, and it seemed as if the task was something too gross even for them to put in hand instantly. I glanced round, meeting each eye in turn, and read confidence in each cruel and curious glance that measured me.

The certainty which they felt about knocking me on the head was a point in my favour, and I decided not to await a combined attack when I must play three points at once, a thing impossible on an open field.

Turning short, I flew at the murderer to whom I was yet the nearest, and against whom my wrath burnt hottest. I was upon him with a sudden swiftness which surprised myself. My feet seemed winged; I felt not the earth under me; my name was vengeance. His small, foxy eyes burnt like coals as I leapt upon him, but he stood his ground, and prepared to receive me upon his sword-point.

Six feet from him I drove my heel into the turf and checked myself dead. He made his stroke. I beat it swiftly aside and repaid it with a famous *botte d'Espagne*, which had never failed me but once, and then with Ieuan. This fellow, however, was no wild John, and I passed his guard without a check. Yet I failed to run him through as I had intended, for he was as nimble as a wild cat and dodged the fatal blow, taking my point in his shoulder, and

Drove his sword clean through Owain's body.

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that but slightly. I had no time to mend the thrust, for upon an instant, the other two ran in and I was compelled to spring back. Luckily, I had a greater reach than any of my opponents, and I kept them for a while at a distance by long, sweeping blows.

The duellist ran round behind me, shortening his weapon to drive it between my shoulders. I wheeled and slashed at him with the full swing of my arm. He raised his sword to ward the blow, and the blades clashed together, striking out red sparks.

But there was not the strength in his wrist to check my rage, and though I failed to cleave his skull, yet I laid open his forehead so that the blood poured into his eyes and blinded him. He flung himself to the earth in terror, expecting to feel my sword through him within the next moment, but his brother was too close at my back for that, and I turned just in time to ward a furious thrust.

My first fury had passed by now, and I dealt no more whirling blows at large upon my foes. Instead, I pulled myself together, drew to my hand, as it were, every trick of fence of which I was master, and felt as assured as a man could feel that within the next few minutes I should avenge my friend with my own hand.

But it was not to be. Yet the vengeance lay close enough. Twice or thrice one of them ran to get behind me to have me between two points. But I was too quick for them, and changed my ground time and again.

One of these short flights brought me to the spot where I had flung down my coat. I caught it up, rolled it round my left arm, and ran in on them as they stood together. Both sprang at me, and I aimed to take the second's point with the coat while I played the murderer, and drove my blade home.

At the very instant of attack the second changed his style, whirled up his sword, and cut me over the head. I had given up my thoughts too much to the other man, and though I raised my arm and broke much of the blow, yet it lighted fairly along my green wound, and the blood spurted as from a fountain.

The pain of a still raw wound hacked open again was most exquisite, yet for a few moments I held my ground. Then a swift dizziness came over me, and I reeled and fell. A shout of savage joy burst from the red man's lips, and he pressed forward to make his wicked plan good, when there was an unearthly scream of rage from the wood, and with a fierce thud of flying hoofs, Whitesock, her great discoloured teeth laid bare and iron heels ready for instant action, dashed in to the rescue. She was just in time, and no more. As she bestrode my body, the weapon that had taken Owain's life was levelled at mine, but her sweeping kicks swiftly drove the enemy back.

The first keen agony of the wound passed, but I felt unable to rise, so sick and giddy was I. Whitesock turned her big, bright eyes on me, and I raised my hand. She laid her velvet muzzle against it for an instant, then looked warily round again. I had left her browsing among the withered herbage of the wood, and she must for awhile have remained ignorant that I had run out into the open, or she would have followed me at once. She had evidently caught sight of me as I fell, and divined that her aid was needed.

My enemies had no pistols, and I felt as safe from their swords as if I had been in a castle, so I lay there waiting for the giddy feeling to pass off before I got to my feet.

The duellist had, by this time, mopped the blood out of his eyes, and he walked unsteadily up to his companions. The blade had taken him across the top of his forehead, and the flowing blood had coated his face. It was now stiffening and drying upon his cheeks, so that his eyes seemed to glare from out a hideous red mask.

"It's only a horse," he cried. "Run in and stab him where he lies."

His brother took him at his word and ran in. He waved his sword in the mare's face as he dashed forward, thinking to frighten her from her post, but Whitesock stood steadily, her head a little down. Then, of a sudden, she reared furiously and stood bolt upright on her hind legs; to my eyes, lying directly under her, she seemed as tall as a tree. The murderer gave a loud yelling laugh, thinking she had reared to wheel round and fly, but never was a more fatal miscalculation made. The first step that brought him within striking distance saw the mare's forefeet darted at him with irresistible fury.

No boxer in the ring ever planted a blow more surely, or with a tithe of the fearful force now employed. The iron-shod hoof driven at lightning speed by the mare's tremendous strength, took him fairly in the throat, cutting short his laugh into a dreadful silence, and hurling him six or seven yards, the body rolling over and over, time and again.

The duellist dropped his sword and flew to his brother. He raised the huddled mass from the ground, then let it fall again with a loud cry. It rolled to his feet and lay sprawling in limp and uncouth attitudes. Had the murderer's neck been clothed in thrice-tempered steel that awful blow must have broken it at once, and Owain was avenged.

This cowed the courage of the remaining two, and they stood despondently over the dead body of their companion. I lifted my hand and hooked my fingers into a stirrup swinging above my face, and dragged myself up.

Whitesock stood like a statue as I scrambled to my feet, and then I leant upon the saddle, the scene before me swaying in time to the keen, darting bursts of pain which swept through my head.

Some minutes passed thus, and then voices came to my ear. I turned a little, and saw with giddy, incurious eyes a whole train of figures hastening towards us.

Then my mind cleared at a stroke as I saw Enid burst from the throng, run swiftly forward, and fling herself on the earth beside Owain's body.

A confused Babel of tongues arose, some crying out in wonder and horror, some demanding explanations, others exchanging threats; for men of both bands had come up, and the sight of their young leaders slain aroused savage wrath. I saw the tall, old man, who had been in attendance upon Enid the first time I met her, pointing and talking furiously, and gesticulating as if he had witnessed the affair and was now describing it, but I understood nothing he said.

I saw my uncle, with wondering, half-frightened glances at me, talking earnestly with the two survivors of the duelling party, but it seemed difficult to rouse them from the dull apathy into which the fall of their friend had thrown them. I saw three men of Nant-y-Bryn raise Owain's body carefully, and bear it with slow steps towards the house. Enid followed them, and I saw her face. It was white and drawn in dreadful grief; but no tear stood in her eyes. She looked towards me, and at first there was no recognition in her glance. Then the knowledge of me came into her look, and I perceived that she had never seen me before, nor dreamt that I was present. She came to a pause within a couple of yards of me, her eyes bent upon my gory face, and I lifted my hand.

"Foul play!" said I, in a voice which sounded thin and dry in my own ears. "I saw it all from the spinney there, but ran in too late to save him from the treacherous stroke. The man who dealt it lies there; he will never strike foul blow more."

The pain in my head doubled and redoubled its harsh, grinding fury. I clung tighter to the saddle; but in vain. My foothold seemed to melt away under me, and I fell unconscious to the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

Back at Nant-y-Bryn.

When I came to myself, I found that I was lying on the bed in the room I had formerly occupied at Nant-y-Bryn. I believe my unconsciousness had passed off into a deep

The iron shod hoof . . . took him fairly in the throat . . . hurling him six or seven yards.

sleep, for I awoke just as one does from slumber, calm and refreshed. My head felt easy and cool, and putting up my hand, I found that my wound had been dressed.

I sat up and looked round me. A fire of turf was burning brightly on the hearth and a table and chair stood near it. I stood up and stretched myself. With the sound of my movements the door was opened and the face of Siani appeared.

"Eat, eat," said she, and pointed to the table. I stepped briskly across, for the injunction chimed gratefully with my humour. I was as empty as a drum, and as hungry as a wolf, and the table was furnished royally. I sat down and did as I had been bidden with a will. Twice during my meal Siani's peering face came at a crack of the door, and I took it for a hint that there was no time to be lost, and that she was there on guard, and I ate the faster. I stood up, feeling myself another man, and Siani's head popped in at the scraping back of my chair.

"You can walk; O yes," said she, showing a very disturbed and anxious face. I thought for a moment, since Siani's English was no easy thing to unravel, then replied, in a little wonder:

"Walk, ay, ay, quite easily."

"To walk away is the best," went on Siani, nodding at me a face which looked all the paler for the obstinate patches of red burnt into the middle of her cheeks.

I rose and approached the door, which Siani opened a little wider, yet held up a hand to forbid me passing through.

"Not go out," said she, "till the mistress bring a word."

I listened, and heard a faint tumult of voices. It sounded as if there were a rare hubbub in the hall and courtyard.

"Who are quarrelling there?" said I.

"All, all," whispered Siani. "Just going to fight."

At that moment a swift shadow flitted along the passage towards us. It was Enid herself.

"Oh," said she quickly, "I am afraid I have done you a great mischief in bringing you here." She stopped, and caught her breath, then went on: "But you seemed so weak, and I knew not what else to do. And now—they are saying the most dreadful things. I know they are not true — they are trying to screen themselves."

"I understand perfectly what you mean," I returned. "Those two whom you found with me declare that I am in the fault of Owain's death."

"Yes," she said, with a sob, "but I knew it impossible. Besides, Gwilym followed them secretly, and saw everything till Hugh Mervyn struck Owain. Then he ran back in terror and shouted it all out in the house."

"Ay, ay," said I, "and that brought you up in a body. But how do they meet the old man's testimony?"

"It is thrust aside as of no weight," said Enid, "and the only manner in which concord can be restored is to turn the whole force of vengeance upon you."

"Last night makes it look the blacker, I admit," said I, seeing how natural was the outburst of fury in my direction. "But no finger was laid upon that man, none. Whitesock threw him and broke his back."

"Their rage is running higher and higher," went on Enid in a strained, hurried voice. "You must go at once or they will kill you. And it is I who have brought you into this trap. I had enough influence to get you safely here, but I fear I cannot——"

I raised the little right hand which was clenched at her side and pressed it to my lips. All my belongings had been carried to the room, and I hastily buckled on belt and sword. I looked at her, and she knew very well what I meant.

"Whitesock is safe and in the stable," she said. "Siani shall——" She paused and bit her lips for a moment. "No," she went on, "they would put her aside and refuse her. I must go myself."

Siani, who had been out in the gallery reconnoitring, now ran silently back, and spoke a few hurried words to her mistress. Enid lifted a hand in despair.

"They have set a guard at the foot of the stair," she whispered; "four men, well-armed, two of each party."

"Then they have come to an agreement," said I, "and it is time for me to move."

I ran across to the window and glanced out cautiously. Two men, carbines on shoulder, stood there talking together.

"What is the attitude of the men at the stair-foot?" I asked, moving swiftly back. Enid went herself to look upon them.

"Careless," she whispered as she returned. "One is sitting on the lowest stair, the other three leaning against the wall."

"Then they have no immediate intention of marching upon me," I remarked. "The guard is simply to make sure, and, without doubt, they believe me still unaware of their intentions. Now, if I could find anything like a rope to slide down on a side of the house where a watch is not placed, and were Whitesock set free, I should be as safe as man could wish."

"The empty room at the end of the gallery," said Enid quickly, "That is it. It has one window looking out on the north side of the house, which, but for that, is a blank wall. Come, come!"

Siani, at a word from her mistress, had disappeared, and I now followed Enid cautiously. Luckily, we had not to pass the stair head, and we soon reached the mouth of a winding passage which led to the room in question, a great bare apartment with windows looking to the north and east.

We were scarcely there when Sinai ran in, noiseless in her stockinged feet, and bearing in her arms a roll of linen cloth. It was about eighteen inches wide, and the piece was many yards long. Better stuff for the work could not be, and I seized upon it at once.

"I will bring Whitesock to that side," said Miss Vaughan.

"No, no," said I; "do not identify yourself too closely with my escape. It may be unpleasant for you in the present state of feeling."

"I!" said she, "There is no need to fear for me. Our people, though rude and rough to strangers, are faithful to their own to the last. They would slay you against my will, true; but hurt me, never."

"But," I urged, "there is no need for it. Do but turn her loose on the hillside, and she will find her way to me as surely as she has four legs under her."

Enid gravely bent her lovely head, and asked:

"How much time do you want?"

"Ten minutes," I replied.

"Then I must be instant," she returned. "Siani shall watch at the gallery, and I will take Gwilym to harness the mare. They are so engaged that I believe we can do it secretly, and get her out through the small gate beyond the kitchen without being seen."

While Enid had been speaking Siani had been following every word which fell from the lips of her mistress, and, at the mention of her post, she swiftly sped away to stand upon it at once.

Enid turned upon me a glance of farewell ere she also went, and my heart smote me bitterly for sorrow of her lonely and dismal position.

"Courage," said I, "take courage!" and I caught her hand again. "I know—why, I cannot say—but I feel sure we shall yet see happier days."

The tears welled up in her soft, dark eyes, and with a swift, instinctive movement I caught her in my arms, and showered kisses on her pale, beautiful face. For a second she held me as tightly, then firmly drew herself away, and went with a swift step to her share of the task.

When the last flutter of her dress had vanished I turned to my linen roll, and began my preparations with the easiest heart in the world. I was bound to get out in some fashion. After the promise of such happiness, was the thread of my fate to be snipped by such vindictive rogues as these? No, indeed, to use a favourite phrase of their own, no, indeed!

I gave the roll a kick and a tug and it flew across the room, leaving me half a dozen yards free to work with. I looked round for a place to fix this end, and for the moment saw nothing which could afford sufficient hold, and then the great centre beam of the ceiling caught my eye. It ran across the room from wall to wall supporting smaller transverse beams on which was laid the planking which formed the floor of the garret above. The ceiling was unplastered, and between the main beam and the boards there was a gap of four inches, the thickness of the smaller rafters.

I whipped out my sword, ran it through the end of the linen and poked the latter through one of these openings. I withdrew the point and thrust through more and more, the stiff, heavy cloth working admirably, until the end hung out over the beam within reach of my hand. I drew it down and formed a slip knot round the main line of the web, then ran the knot tight, took a good grip of the stuff gathered in my hands, and swung myself to and fro like a pendulum, my feet clear of the floor. The linen was, of course, thread, very strong, and bore the strain easily.

"So far, so good," thought I, and approached the window. There seemed no one about, and I opened one side of the wide casement. I put out my head inch by inch and saw that the coast was clear. On this side of the house was neither door nor outbuilding; the smooth mountain turf ran clean to the foot of the wall.

That eyes would be on me as soon as I moved I knew very well, but as these would be in the heads of the Red Men of the Dusk, Ieuan's scouts posted on the heights above, I had nothing to fear in that direction. I lifted the big roll of linen in my arms, and returned to the window.

I bent out and listened, and looked again and again. All was quiet, and I dropped the roll. Down it went, turning and twisting, and striking the ground with a slight thud.

So much stuff was in it that the diameter was but little reduced when it reached the turf, and it was heavy enough to lie like a plummet, keeping the length, which lay unrolled against the wall, straight and steady.

I drew my belt tighter, and threw one leg over the window. I crumpled the width of linen between my hands, and, in a second more, would have drawn over my other leg, and began to slide down, when a faint sound of voices made me pause. I turned my head and saw, to my utter dismay, three men come round the corner of the house near to me. Their heads were close together and they were talking earnestly, but in low tones, one interrupting the other, and all gesticulating fiercely as these people do when greatly excited. They were walking away from the house and, in the earnestness of their debate, looked neither to the one side nor the other.

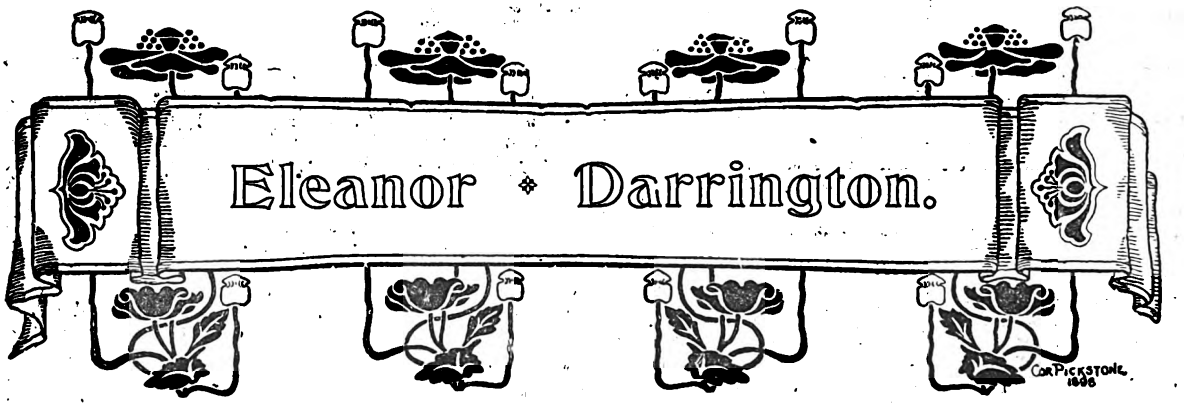
I watched them without moving a muscle. Let them go but far enough to give me a chance to slide down and gain a little law, I would trust my heels—until Whitesock could get to me—for the rest.

Had their feet but moved as fast as my heart, I had been safe beyond a doubt, but in their eager talk they lagged slower and slower and, at a dozen yards from the house corner, stopped utterly, their backs turned to me. And there sat I, astride the sill, my mind in a tangle of indecision. Twice and thrice I measured the distance with my eye, having more than half an inclination to take my chance. But the faintest sound would now catch their ears, for only one was speaking, and he softly, and the rattle of feet or scabbard against the wall would betray me at once.

A comrade out of view called upon one of the talkers by name. The halberd-bearer turned his head, shouted his wonder at sight of the linen and of me on the sill, and justified my unwillingness to trust my chances of sliding down by leaping to the foot of the wall and presenting his weapon. The second man joined him with a drawn sword, and the third ran like a hare round the corner.

(To be continued.)

Eleanor Darrington.



It had rained steadily all day, and now, at the approach of evening, though the downpour was lessening, the clouds were still black, and there seemed not the least promise of clearing weather.

"This is intolerable," and Eleanor threw up the window with a force which made Mrs. Alton start.

"Oh, you mean the rain. It is provoking, our last day here, too! How cold that air is! I believe I was almost asleep. I wonder what time it is!"

Eleanor made no reply, but remained gazing moodily out at the sea. The dashing of the waves on the beach sounded mournfully; the water shone darkly in the fast coming night. Lights were beginning to twinkle along the Spa harbour. Eleanor's face wore a strangely pathetic expression in the dim light. Her companion regarded her curiously. Was she regretting leaving Scarborough?

"No moonlight sail to-night. But, of course, Mr. Langham will come over to say good-bye," observed Mrs. Alton tentatively. There was no reply from the figure at the window.

"It must be almost time to dress for dinner. I will light the gas," and Mrs. Alton moved briskly about the room.

Eleanor left the window as a knock was heard at the door, followed by the entrance of a servant bearing a bunch of fragrant red roses, and an envelope—"For Miss Darrington."

Eleanor buried her face in the flowers an instant, and then opened the note and read:

My dear Miss Darrington,—My disappointment is very great that the weather prevents our sail. I know that you are fond of dark red roses. Will you deem these worthy to be worn by you this evening? I shall give myself the sad pleasure of a parting call. Very sincerely yours, Albert Langham.

She handed it to Mrs. Alton, who read it very deliberately.

"Well," she paused; "I thought he would come, but what will you do with him, Eleanor?"

"I think I do not understand you."

"I mean this: he loves you and means to marry you, and——"

"Means to marry me!" interrupted Miss Darrington, haughtily. "Have I given him reason to suppose that I am to be had for the asking?"

"Oh, come, don't crush me. We are close enough friends, certainly, to discuss this frankly. You must know that he—well—wants to marry you, then. Do you intend to marry him?"

"I have told you before that so far marriage has had no part in my plans of life."

"Do you mean to say that you care nothing for Albert Langham?"

"No."

"You do care for him, then?"

Eleanor raised the roses to her face, and, looking calmly at Mrs. Alton, answered:

"Yes."

Her companion smiled. "I thought so. Then you will marry him, of course?"

"I shall not marry him." She was silent a moment, and then, throwing the flowers on the table, said: "I shall tell it all to you, as I have made such an admission. Oh, I care for him,—I, who have said that no man should influence my life! I have met other men as handsome, as attractive; they did not move me. Why is it that in the course of ten short weeks he has become the centre of all to me? But it is a folly, a madness. I will not submit to it. I will crush it out. It is a humiliation."

Mrs. Alton was intensely surprised. Was this the proud, self-contained Eleanor Darrington, who was making so passionate an avowal?

She went to the window and leant out a minute; then, suddenly turning, she said:

"It sounds like the confession of some silly girl of seventeen, and I am a woman of twenty-six. Bah! What folly!" She moved restlessly up and down the room. "Love! It is an illusion—and marriage a——"

"Oh! Eleanor, don't—I——"

Miss Darrington seized her friend's hand.

"Don't look at me so reproachfully, Clara. You know what my sentiments are on this subject. I admit that Albert Langham has made a certain impression on me, aroused a certain feeling in me which people call love. But I do not believe in it; it won't last. It has been born of the charm of the sea, the delicious air, the witchery of the moonlight nights, all the beautiful things we have so enjoyed; but once I am away from all these, and from him, it will pass away."

She laughed scornfully.

"It must pass. Marry? My freedom is too precious."

She carelessly took up the roses, and said in her ordinary tones:

"How fine these are! Let us dress for dinner." Then she left the room, carrying the flowers with her.

When she appeared at dinner, she was as self-possessed as usual and radiantly lovely in a white gown of some soft diaphanous material. Two of the roses were on her bosom and another in her hair.

Bert Langham appeared later in the evening. Mrs. Alton observed the flash in his dark eyes, as they rested on the flowers in Miss Darrington's dress. On the plea of letters to be written she made her adieux, and left him alone with Eleanor. But, if anything momentous took place between them, nothing in Miss Darrington's

manner after his departure indicated it, and Mrs. Alton did not venture to question her. The next morning they left for London.

* * * * *

The marriage of Mr. Bert Langham and Miss Cecilia Dalton is to be one of the fashionable events of the coming month.

Miss Darrington dropped the paper. So he was going to be married? Well—why, what was the matter with her? She felt faint, and such a curious little thrill had passed over her.

Of course, she had known that he would. Had she not told him that she was sure that he, as well as she, would soon forget those ten weeks at Scarborough? But he had vowed—of course, he had; all men do so. How long ago was it? Why, it was nearly three years. How those last months in the South of France had dragged! How good it had seemed that morning to wake up in London!

But, what was the matter with her? She felt so languid, it must be the effects of her journey. Yet she had felt so well this morning. She would go out for a brisk walk. Yes, that was what she needed. She wished that the Altons were not away. She wondered if Clara knew this Cecilia Dalton.

As she put on her wrap she wondered if she were beautiful. Who was she? Her name was not familiar. How dull it seemed! Was the weather changing? As she walked along, Eleanor wondered where the glory of the day had gone. The morning had seemed so bright.

A gentleman coming hastily round a corner brushed up against her. His quickly spoken "Beg pardon" changed into a surprised "Why—Eleanor!" She looked up; it was her cousin, Jack Alton.

"I thought you were in Glasgow," she remarked, as she shook hands with him.

"We got back this morning. Business was pressing, and they wired me. But you do not look well. Too much Riviera?"

"How is Clara?"

"She is blooming; gone driving with the Lanes. She was not expecting you till to-morrow. She will be delighted. Come to dinner with us this evening; we will go to the Lyceum. I must rush now—man waiting for me. We shall expect you, mind."

Eleanor walked on. How rude of Jack to tell her that she was not looking well! She must take a long walk, and get up a colour for the evening. But who was this Cecilia Dalton? Yet what difference did it make? Of course he could marry whom he pleased. She had said that would get over the folly of Scarborough. Of course, she was over it. But she was disappointed. She had looked forward to meeting him and being friends; that would have been delightful. She did enjoy talking to him. He was so companionable—so—so—but that, of course, was all over, now. How tired she was! Perhaps it would be better to go home. She must not be tired in the evening.

When she reached home, she looked critically at her reflection in the mirror. Yes, she did look fagged out.

At last she fell asleep. When she awoke, it was almost dark. She was wretched. How could she endure it? She must get away from herself, the theatre was the thing.

She rang for lights, and was soon engaged in the preparation of an elaborate toilette. She would wear one of her most beautiful dresses. Jack should not again have a chance to say that she did not look well. And then, supposing that Clara should suspect? Horror! This last thought brought a spot of colour to either

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cheek, and a feeling of strength. She would look her best; her parting glance into her mirror assured her that she did.

Mrs. Alton's remarks on her appearance were satisfactory. Jack assured her that she was stunning. On their way to the theatre Jack remarked:

"I see that Bert Langham's marriage is announced for next month."

"Who is Miss Dalton?" inquired Eleanor carelessly.

"She is a Plymouth girl," returned Mrs. Alton. "She is very young, and extremely pretty. I met her last winter."

Eleanor felt a pang. "Young and extremely pretty," and she was old—twenty-nine nearly.

"Langham is dreadfully gone," laughed Jack. "He runs down to Plymouth three or four times a week."

Another pang, and he had vowed to her not three years ago! Oh, the shame of it! He had forgotten, and she—she, the strong-minded, self-poised Eleanor Darrington, who had laughed at love, was still remembering. She would not think of him; and she launched into such a brilliant flow of talk that Mrs. Alton wondered how Jack could have thought of her as seeming dull.

The opera-house was filled with a gay audience, and the overture was just beginning when they took their seats. Miss Darrington's glance wandered slowly round, smilingly acknowledged several recognitions, and then settled on the orchestra. The music was sparkling and gay, and Eleanor's spirits rose; something of her old serenity was returning. How foolish she had been to be so miserable! Of course that nonsense would pass away. Perhaps, if she had noticed an occupant of a seat to the left, just back of her, she might not have felt so confident.

Albert Langham was seated there in company with his cousin, Herbert Langham. He had seen Eleanor's entrance and his heart had given a great bound, as he saw that she was more beautiful than ever. All the old madness came rushing over him. His gaze never wandered from her face. He was in a tumult of delight at being so near her. Perhaps, perhaps, if he had braved her coldness and almost scorn of his love, he might have won; he had been too easily discouraged. Why had he let all this time pass by? Why had he not followed her? She had cared for him; she had not dared to deny it; but she had laughed at it as a folly.

He scarcely heard the music, but sat in a whirl of thought until the curtain fell at the close of the first act. The movement of the audience aroused him. His cousin left him to speak to some friends. Eleanor was laughing and talking with the Altons. How happy she seemed! Presently she looked round, and her gaze met Langham's. He bowed; she returned his salute—in a somewhat surprised manner, he thought—and then gave her attention to the stage where the curtain was rising on the second act.

Eleanor was in a rage. To think that she should see him! Of all things it was the one to upset her. What was that look in his eyes? Oh, was the misery of the afternoon coming back? But that look in his eyes! How dared he, when he was going to marry another woman? She wished the opera were over; she felt tired again, and the music was not as bright as before. The soprano was wailing over an unhappy love. How tiresome it all was! Would the curtain never fall?

But it came to an end at last, and Jack proposed that they join the promenaders. After a few turns they came upon Langham and his cousin. The latter shook hands with the Altons, while Langham greeted Miss Darrington. Eleanor answered—she scarcely knew how. She could not meet his glance, for there was that look in his eyes again. Her self-possession had utterly deserted her. The crush of the promenaders had separated them from the Altons and Langham's cousin. Eleanor vaguely wondered who the latter was. She and Langham were practically alone in an angle near the stairway.

"Ah!" he murmured, "we meet again after all these years."

Eleanor felt faint.

"I cannot, will not, believe, Eleanor, that we have met once more only that I should be again repulsed. Give me some hope. There has not been an hour all this dreary time that I have not longed for you."

Eleanor found it impossible to utter a word. She could not raise her eyes. How dared he?

"You told me that I would get over what you called a madness; but I love you more than ever. You did care a little then. Do you not now?"

Her indignation now dominated every other feeling, and found voice. She drew herself up haughtily; her eyes flashed scorn. "Sir, how dare you! You are about to marry another woman. Have you no honour?"

Here Jack's voice was heard: "Let me present Mr. Herbert Langham, Eleanor."

As the Altons came up, Miss Darrington saw that the corridor was nearly empty; the promenaders were returning to their seats:

"I have heard a great deal of you, Miss Darrington," said Herbert Langham, as he bowed low over her hand. "Mrs. Alton has been very impatient for your return to London."

Eleanor looked bewildered.

"He is Mr. Langham's cousin," exclaimed Mrs. Alton.

A sudden light burst upon Eleanor. She glanced quickly at Albert Langham; he looked amused. The meaning of Eleanor's last words to him had dawned upon him. He turned to Herbert:

"My dear fellow, we have got mixed up. Miss Darrington has just been congratulating *me* upon *your* approaching marriage"—then to Eleanor—"You see, we are both called Bert though my cousin is Herbert, and I Albert."

The Altons laughed.

"Why, Eleanor, did you really think it was Mr. Langham?" asked Mrs. Alton.

Herbert said whimsically:

"Don't you think it is hard on me, Miss Darrington, that my cousin is always Mr. Langham, and I am only Bert. But it is too much that he should receive congratulations due to me. It is I who am to marry the sweetest girl in Plymouth."

Eleanor observed that he was light and fair, and much younger than his cousin.

"We must go to our seats now," said Mrs. Alton.

"You will both join us at supper after the play," ordered Jack.

If Mrs. Alton had any curiosity in regard to the meeting of Eleanor and Langham, she made no sign.

Eleanor was in a whirl. She could not think; she dared not. Albert Langham had no further opportunity that evening of speaking to her, but the next day he went to her and demanded an answer.

"These years have proved, Eleanor, that my feeling for you is not the 'fancy' you called it. If you can tell me that you have 'crushed out' your feeling for me, I will go away and leave you. Can you?"

But Eleanor could not.

E. Z. Windsor.

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Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "with much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

TOOTH-ACHE
CURED INSTANTLY BY
BUNTER'S NERVINE
Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction, Sleepless Nights Prevented.
Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS
KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.
KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS
Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.
Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.
ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.
Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.
THE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL PIANOFORTE CO.,
Granby St. & Selborne St., LIVERPOOL.
Agents wanted where not represented.

PAMPHLET AND ADVICE FREE
Every man and woman in search of HEALTH should write without delay for the
NEW MEDICAL WORK, *Health, the Sunshine of Life,*
which will be sent POST FREE to any address on application. The treatise contains full particulars of the treatment of the various ills that flesh is heir to. It also contains a selection from the thousands of testimonials received in favour of the ELECTROPATHIC BELT. ADVICE FREE of charge (personally or by letter).
Note address, and write to
THE MEDICAL BATTERY CO., LTD.,
489, OXFORD ST., LONDON, W.

FREE TO YOU.
GOLD WATCHES GIVEN AWAY.
To advertise our beautifully illustrated story magazine *Homeland*, we have, during the past few months, Given Away hundreds of pounds in cash prizes and more than fifty thousand watches and other presents to our subscribers. We now have a novel and pleasing proposal to make to readers of this paper who have not yet subscribed to *Homeland*. If you want a beautiful watch, now is your opportunity. For a very short time, to make our paper more widely known, we are freely giving away handsome gold watches and chains of the retail value of £5 5s. to subscribers. We cannot do this for long, and when our present sale has been sufficiently increased, we must cease to do so. For this reason we cannot send these presents to Colonial and foreign subscribers.

Send a postal order for 1/6 to pay for one year's subscription to *Homeland*, and we will at once **send as a free gift** a handsome 18-carat gold-cased **Watch Chain and Charm** complete. Remember this is for a short time only. We have only a limited number to give away free, so send at once, but your subscription will be returned if sent too late to secure this free gift.
The magazine will follow month by month for twelve months by post, but you get this wonderful present at once.
If you wish us to send it specially packed in strong box by registered post we will do so if you send sixpence extra (that is a postal order for 2/-), as an article like this should be registered to insure absolutely safe delivery.—Address, *Homeland* Offices, (86 Dept.), 118 & 119 Newgate Street, London, E.C.

ENORMOUS PRIZE SCHEME
For JULY and OCTOBER, 1899.
WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER.
16,000 Handsome PRIZES, value £8,898 4s.
LIST OF PRIZES.

1	Cash Prize of £100	£100	0 0
2	Cash Prizes of £50 each	100	0 0
5	Piano, value £40 each	200	0 0
4	Cash Prizes of £25 each	100	0 0
5	Cash Prizes of £20 each	100	0 0
10	Organs, value £20 each	200	0 0
10	Cash Prizes of £10 each	100	0 0
40	Sewing Machines, value £8 each	320	0 0
40	Cash Prizes of £5 each	200	0 0
150	Cash Prizes of £2 each	300	0 0
300	Cash Prizes of £1 each	300	0 0
600	Gents Umbrellas, value 15/- each	450	0 0
600	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 15/- each	450	0 0
600	Cash Prizes, value 10/- each	300	0 0
300	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 7/6 each	112	10 0
1,000	Cash Prizes of 5/- each	250	0 0
2,000	Boxes of our famous "Nubolic Soap," packed in fancy boxes, containing 18 12-oz. Tablets, value 4/- per box	400	0 0
2,333	Pictures of the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade," in gilt frame, value 4/- each	466	12 0
8,000	Each Competition.	Each Competition 4,449	2 0

☞ Do not be afraid of sending in your Wrappers, however small your collection, as in our Prize Competitions of January and February every competitor secured a Prize; and in the March Competition nearly every competitor was successful.
CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.
Cut off the top portion of Wrapper, with the words **Watson's Matchless Cleanser**, and send, postage or carriage paid, to **Joseph Watson & Sons, Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds**, not later than *July* 31st or *October* 31st. If any parcel arrives, postage or carriage not being fully paid, such parcel will be refused. Be careful to see that the postage is paid. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to the senders of the highest numbers of Wrappers. Each parcel sent in must contain the full name and address of sender, and the number of Wrappers sent must be marked on the same paper. A list, giving result of Competition, will be enclosed with each prize when it is sent out. The decision of J. Watson & Sons, Limited, to be final. Every Wrapper must have first contained soap. No employée of Joseph Watson & Sons, Limited, will be eligible.
Watson's Matchless Cleanser has the Largest Sale of full weight 1-lb. Tablets in the World; Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, &c.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

We want a clean copy of *S. S.* No. 460 and one of No. 493, and we shall be willing to pay sixpence each for them. The first perfect copies received will be accepted.

L. T.—Yes, people who wish to live well and cheaply at the same time should go to Antioch. A gentleman tried to be extravagant there, but found it almost impossible—house-rent servants, horses, board, washing, and wine included—to spend more than £40 a year. Oh, that Antioch were London! Fancy 7½lb. of mutton for 1s., fat fowls for 2d. apiece, 70lb. of fish for 1s., and all possible fruits and vegetables sufficient for one's household for 2d. a week!

T. H.—Some 23,000 persons sleep each night on the Thames in what constitutes the port of London.

Gee.—With moderate care and good usage a horse's life may be prolonged to twenty-five, thirty-five or forty years. An English gentleman had three horses which died in his possession at the ages of thirty-five, thirty-seven, and thirty nine years respectively. The oldest was in a carriage the very day he died, strong and vigorous, but was carried off by a spasmodic colic to which he was subject. A horse in use at a riding-school in Woolwich lived to be forty years old, and a barge horse of the Mersey and Irwell Navigation Company is declared to have been in his sixty-second year when he died.

R. D.—A row of gun-cotton reaching from Edinburgh to London could be fired in two minutes, so rapid is the transmission of detonation from one part to another.

E. G.—Eight churches have stood on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral. The first one was built in the year 223.

Nose.—A Dutch physician has declared that a close connection exists between the exercise of our mental faculties and disorders of the nose. The opinion is expressed that if it were generally known how many cases of chronic headache, of inability to learn or perform mental work, were due to chronic disease of the nose, many of these cases would be easily cured, and the number of child-victims of the so-called over-pressure in education would be notably reduced. According to the above-mentioned authority, it would seem that breathing through the nose is absolutely indispensable, in order to secure the full value of the mental capacity.

T. M.—The value of the average annual productions of the earth has been estimated at £2,241,142,100.

T.—Yes, it is true that Dean Farrar once said that Cruikshank offered £100 for proof of a violent crime committed by a total abstainer, and the money remains unclaimed to this day.

Waves.—The force of waves breaking on the shore is equal to seventeen tons to the square yard.

A. P.—The apple enters more largely into folk-lore and legend than almost any other fruit. In England there was of old a peculiar dance in honour of the apple tree, and various songs were sung and bowls of cider emptied to secure a good apple harvest from the fates. In Germany the girls "snap apple seeds" on New Year's Eve to see from which direction a lover is coming. In Austria a girl cuts an apple in two at one blow, and counts the seeds. If there are as many in one half as in the other, she will marry. If they are odd, she will be an old maid. If a seed is cut in two, she will quarrel with her husband and be separated from him.

Cat.—A French scientist declares that the domestic cats of the world carry at least 30 per cent. of the common contagious diseases from house to house.

W. S.—The British Government realises something like £13,000 a year for waste paper. I am of opinion that the wasted red tape is worth much more than that.

Beard.—Among the Roman women at one period there was a morbid ambition to grow beards, and they used to shave their faces and smear them with unguents to produce these inappropriate appendages. Cicero tells us that there was a law passed against this practice, which is a proof that it must have been carried to a great extent. Among the Greeks, too, a similar fancy appears at one time to have existed, for they represented their Cyprian Venus with a beard, and Suidas asserts that false beards were more than once in vogue with the Athenian women.

Title.—Russia takes the lead. She has about 1,000,000 titled personages out of a population of 100,000,000.

Wayne.—The name of Wayne is the title of more places in the United States than any other.

Roll.—It is estimated that on an average each penny in circulation changes hands eleven times a week.

Scent.—Some people have defects in the sense of smell, which are analogous to the visual defects of colour-blind people. One healthy person, examined by an eminent scientist recently, could not distinguish the scent of violets from the totally different one of garlic or onions, though his perception and recognition of other common smells appeared to be quite normal.

Ex.—This is the curious experiment you mean: If the hands be placed for some time, the one in very hot, the other in very cold water, and both be then removed to water of an intermediate temperature, the impression made upon the heated hand will be a sensation of cold, whilst the chilled hand will feel a glow of heat from its change of situation. Persons leaving a frosty atmosphere for the shelter of a warm room thus experience pain—a prickly, tingling, and flushing of the skin—from that moderate degree of heat which is barely comfortable to those who have not been so exposed to cold. It is in consequence of a similar accumulation of excitability, resulting from the winter's inaction, that vegetation commences in the spring at a temperature which in autumn is insufficient to maintain life in the exhausted foliage.

Dis.—About 2,000 soldiers are discharged yearly for bad conduct.

Scribe.—It may be worked out in this way: A rapid penman can write thirty words a minute. To do this he must draw his pen through the space of a rod—16½ ft. In forty minutes his pen travels a furlong, and in five hours and a third a mile. We make, on an average, sixteen curves or turns of the pen for each word written. Writing thirty words a minute, we must make forty-three curves to each second; in an hour, 28,000; in five hours, 144,000; and in three hundred days, working only five hours each day, we make no fewer than 43,200,000 curves and turns of the pen.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page ,, ,, ,, ...	5	0	0
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Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, May **16th**, if intended for the issue on sale May **30th**, and dated June **3rd**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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A MOST DELICIOUS SUMMER BEVERAGE.

It is difficult sometimes to know what to drink during the spring and summer months. This long-felt want has been met by the production of Eiffel Tower Lemonade.

Eiffel Tower Lemonade is made from the finest lemons, and the great advantage is that it is partly manufactured in Italy in the midst of the lemon orchards. The lemons are taken direct from the trees to the factory to commence their transformation into Eiffel Tower Lemonade.

You can get thirty-two tumblers (or two gallons) for fourpence halfpenny, but *be sure that you get Eiffel Tower Lemonade* when you ask for it, as its great success has brought out inferior imitations that only cause disappointment.

If you cannot get it from your grocer, send 4½d. to the makers, G. Foster Clark & Co., 115 Eiffel Tower Factory, Maidstone, they will send you a bottle post free by return.

300 BOTTLES GIVEN AWAY WEEKLY.

The firm have adopted the following novel method to induce everybody to try their Lemonade. The first fifty letters opened every day not only have the Lemonade sent by return post, but the stamps are also returned to the fortunate applicants.

A second bottle will not be supplied by the firm, but must be obtained of Grocers, Chemists, or Stores.

P & S ZAIROID CORSETS

Beautiful creations for the new century, brightening up also the remaining months of the old. No daintier or more delightful goods ever made than the P. & S. They stand apart from the corset crowd. They are the latest triumph of the corset-makers' art, and are winning golden opinions everywhere. Perfection of shape. High-grade materials. Expert workmanship. Economic prices. Rustless Zairoid replaces steel in busks and supports Think what all this means!

If this interests you, send to us for our new Booklet and Price List. Nothing to pay, not even postage. You can then obtain from your Draper when you are ready.

W. PRETTY & SON, IPSWICH.

VARICOCELE. Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, or Varicose Veins, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free.

S. S. MURRAY, 7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

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Long remnants of Superior, Pure, Heavy White and Grey Calicoes, Flannelettes for Blousings and underclothing; Prints, Piques, Fancy Blousings, &c. Guaranteed no rub ish. Money returned if not satisfied. Assorted parcels or made up as ordered. 12 yds. 3 3, or 24 yds. 5/9. Carriage paid to any part.

THE EMDEN MANUFACTURING CO., 167 Princess Street, Manchester.

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ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

Immense stock Ladies' and Gents'. New and Secondhand. Wonderful bargains. Carriage paid. Easy payments from 10s. monthly, or large cash discount. 1 year's guarantee. *Illustrated Price Lists post free on application.* Old cycles exchanged.—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE Co. Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Road, London.

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KAPUTINE

SAFE REMEDY CURES

HEADACHE and NEURALGIA

IMMEDIATELY.

And is sold by all leading Chemists in Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

The fact that "KAPUTINE" is recommended by many leading Medical Men, and is used in National Hospitals and Infirmaries proves that it is THE, THE recognised SAFE REMEDY FOR HEADACHES.

Refuse Substitutes and demand "KAPUTINE," the Safe Remedy. There is no substitute "LIKE IT"; nothing "AS GOOD"; nothing "SIMILAR."

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
For Dizziness and Drowsiness.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Invigorate the Nerves.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Purify the Blood.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Restore the Appetite.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Strengthen the Stomach.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Are the Best Medicine in the World.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Give Tone to the Muscular System.

BEECHAM'S PILLS
For Female Ailments.

Sold by all Chemists and Druggists Everywhere.

IN BOXES, 1/1½ & 2/9 EACH.

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO.

"Marvellous value for the price."—*Publishers' Record.*

"A sure sign that we are already in the season of seaside visitors is seen in the piles of 'Beecham's Views' on the newsagents' counters. . . . . These views are beautifully executed considering the price at which they are turned out. And what is more, they sell beautifully, as articles of good value for money always do sell."—*Book and News Trades Gazette.*

A GREAT PUBLISHING SUCCESS, being the most complete Series of Views of the British Isles yet placed within reach of the people. Seven millions of these books have been printed since January, 1897. The series of 120 Volumes (94 of England and Wales, 20 of Scotland, and 6 of Ireland) has been published in book form, arranged in local combination, each book containing 24 photographic reproductions of well-selected views of the most interesting objects and places of architectural and historical interest, and the choicest bits of scenery and beauty in each district. The series consists of nearly 3,000 views, which are beautifully reproduced on specially-prepared English-made art paper. **Price ONE PENNY per Volume,** from most Newsagents and Booksellers, or from the Proprietor.

WHITSUNTIDE HOLIDAY NUMBER.

S.S. PEARSON'S 100,000 PRIZES COUPON. S.S.
May 20th, 1899.
S.S. No. 2. S.S.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

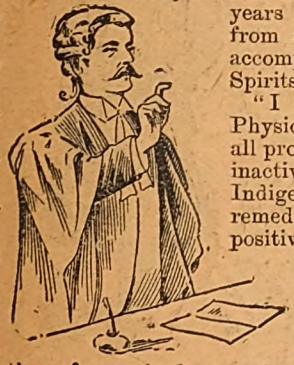
No. 542. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 20TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

"£185 in Doctor's Bills."

(Read the Statement.)

Mr. J. Clarkson makes the following interesting Statement:

"I am anxious you should publish my case on account of the obstinacy and severity of the Symptoms. For years I had been suffering fearfully from an inactive, sluggish Liver, accompanied by Dyspepsia and Low Spirits.



"I consulted some of the best Physicians in England, and, although all pronounced it the same, a 'torpid, inactive Liver, accompanied by Indigestion,' their treatment and remedies were alike unavailing; I positively spent £185 in Doctors' bills. You, sirs, may not know the misery of taking bottle after bottle of Doctors' physic, without the slightest relief from pain, or amelioration of one single symptom. I am thankful to state, however, that I was completely cured by taking your wonderful Guy's Tonic.

"I saw an advertisement of yours stating 'Improvement follows the first dose.' This I can say was truthfully so in my case; I had not taken the first dose of Guy's Tonic ten minutes before I felt its beneficial influence on the Liver and Digestive Organs. The distressing Despondency and Nervousness disappeared as if by magic; the dull, aching pain between the Shoulders, constant Headache, tenderness about the Liver, flushing of the Face after meals, Drowsiness, Giddiness, Flatulency, and the other Symptoms have not returned, and it is now eighteen months since my restoration took place."

Thousands of Voluntary Testimonials are on file. The original Letters may be seen on application to Guy's Tonic Company, 12 Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.

Guy's Tonic is a British Preparation of simple Vegetable origin. It is now employed in Hospital Practice, and is widely recommended by Medical Men. Guy's Tonic, 1s. 1½d. per Six-ounce Bottle. Of all Chemists and Stores.

10/6 BUY DIRECT FROM **Allen Foster & Co** BY PARCEL POST. 10/6

SOLE MAKERS OF THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

A Bargain in Costume Skirts. Made in a good Black and Navy Serge lined throughout, price only **3/11**, carriage 5d. extra.

Design No. 97.

10/6

Design No. 97.—Half a Guinea.—Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable **Chesterfield** Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or in the famous **Specialite Serge** for **Half a Guinea** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at **5/6**; carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple. When ordering, please give measurement round bust (under arms), length of sleeve inside, size of waist, and length of Skirt in front.

Design No. 97. **10/6.** Patterns & Sketches post free.

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10/6 Carriage Paid 6d. extra.

Design No. 94. HALF A GUINEA.

Design No. 94 is a truly marvellous creation as a Costume. It stands unrivalled in point of value, style, and appearance—acknowledged everywhere **the best Half-Guinea Costume of the Season.** It is produced in the excellent **Venetian Cloth** or in the **Specialite Serge**—two grand cloths, unsurpassed for wear and durability. It is a **velvet trimmed** Costume with bodice and sleeves lined. It has a pretty pleated front and fits tight to the figure. The skirt is cut full and well-made. Truly marvellous value, and only **Half a Guinea.** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra; or Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d. extra.

ALL PATTERNS AND PARTICULARS POST FREE.

5/6

Design No. 137. 5/6.

THE COSTUME SKIRT OF THE SEASON, and the latest design. Tailor-cut skirt, plenty of fulness, with inverted pleats at back, laced up with cord at top in the latest fashion, as shown in sketch. Made in two grand cloths, the Specialité Serge and the Venetian Cloth. Price only **5/6**, carriage 5d. extra. Satisfaction guaranteed.

Ladies can call and inspect our goods at our Show Rooms, 17 Roscoe St., Golden Lane, E.C.

Business Hours, 9 to 6. Saturdays, 9 to 1.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

The London Manufacturers,

17 ROSCOE STREET, GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES

AND

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3 three assorted 1/8.

Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

"THEY LOOK SMART AND YIELD LOYAL SERVICE."

THE John Noble HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Promptly sent by Parcel Post, direct from the **Largest Firm of Costumiers and Mantlemen in the World.**

Three Gold Medals awarded to JOHN NOBLE, LTD., the originators of Half-Guinea Costumes, whose Advertisements many persons imitate, but whose Costumes no firm has seriously endeavoured to equal.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE

to all who name *Short Stories* of the two good durable Cloths in which these Costumes are chiefly supplied.

I. John Noble Cheviot Serge, weighty and weather-resisting.

II. John Noble Costume Coating, smooth-surfaced.

A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloth (6yd. 52in. wide) for 7/6. Carriage 8d. **7/6**

COLOURS of all Costumes are Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, Royal Blue, Crimson, and Reseda.

The Three Sizes in Stock are 34, 36, and 38 in. round bust (under arms). Waists 24, 26, 28 in.; Skirt being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front. Any other size can be specially made to measure 1/6 extra.

Model 1083.

Well made Bodice, saddle and sleeves lined, prettily trimmed black Russia braid and embroidery in contrasting shade. **10/6** Price complete, 10/6. Carriage, 6d. The Skirt alone for 5/6. Carriage 6d.

Model 1014.

A Smart Frock, with Kilted skirt attached to bodice of same material, and a smart Reefer Coat, lined through, and finished off with gilt buttons. The two garments together form a splendid outfit; while the frock alone can be worn for school or house wear. The Jacket too, would look well with any other frock. In Black and Navy only.

Lengths	21	24	27	30	33	36 in.
Prices	7/11	8/11	9/11	11/-	12/9	14/9 each.

Postage, 6d. extra.

Model 1014.

Bankers—"London City and Midland" Bank Ltd.

Kindly name *Short Stories* when writing to

JOHN NOBLE LTD. Brook Street Mills, **MANCHESTER**

You will be pleased with CHANCELLOR SOAPS.

That's why we want **YOU** to try them. As First Prize we offer a **£300 HOUSE**, and hundreds of other prizes. By using Chancellor Soaps and saving your wrappers till **June** you get the best and cheapest Soaps extant, you **may get** the House or a 50 guinea Piano, you will **probably get** a splendid Lady's Silver Watch, or if not you **must get** a money Prize.

Every Competitor gets one.

GET A BAR TO-DAY!

Won't You?

Send 4d. for Sample Bar

GIVEN AWAY

HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR

A £300 HOUSE

LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½D AND 3D BAR.

CHANCELLOR SOAPS

to 18 Clerkenwell Road, London.

By E. MILLS.

I.—HIS "ESPECIAL FEAR."

I.

RUDYARD KIPLING says somewhere that every human being has his or her "especial fear." One will dread the rush of seething waters and do deeds of heroism in the face of fire. Another will risk his life in the stormiest seas and be unnerved to helplessness by the hiss and crackle of flames.

My story is of a man who was accounted "brave," because in the course of an ordinary life, the danger from cold steel seldom takes undue prominence.

Once in his childhood, he had been reduced to a state of panic bordering on lunacy, because he had caught up a knife by its blade in the dark. He had only cut himself slightly, but for many nights afterwards he dreamt that he was falling down the smooth granite face of a sky-reaching cliff, from whose polished surface projected a single sharp sword blade. Far below him the light glinted on the up-raised points of other sharp two-edged swords, and, to save himself from falling on these, he had clutched the single blade with both hands, and had felt it cut through the skin and muscles until it grated on the bone.

It was only a dream, although an unpleasant one, and at this point he usually awoke, much surprised not to find his fingers severed from his hands and the bedclothes sopping with his life's blood.

But this happened long ago, and was forgotten, with other childish things. And if you had asked any of Jeff Wardlaw's fellow-jackaroos on Maxworth Downs for his character, they would have given him a good one for courage, and, moreover, could add that he was a jolly companion, never shirked his share of work, and was not unduly proud because he had the handsomest face and figure and the most "winning" ways with women of any fellow in the district.

The boss of Maxworth Downs had an only daughter called Barbara, a pretty little flirt, who prided herself upon a certain gentle hard-heartedness; in fact, she had no wish to lose her heart and lay aside the merry life which had been hers for the last few years. She had many admirers, of course, chief amongst them the bank clerk from the neighbouring bush town. He was a tall thin fellow, with sandy hair, large ears, and an honest, ugly face, whose one redeeming feature was a pair of kindly quizzical grey eyes.

Barbara liked Fred Rodwell fairly well, but she looked down on him not a little because of his utter want of knowledge of riding, shooting, and swimming, for he had been brought up within sound of Bow Bells, and had worked hard at his desk since his boyhood, with no time for athletics or recreations of any sort.

Now he was in Australia he was learning to ride, and Barbara had been witness of his attempts many times when he came out to her father's station. He had failed her, too, in a critical moment—viz., when she had sent her dog into a lagoon to fetch out a stick. The poor animal became entangled in the weeds. Rodwell was with her, but could do no good, for he was unable to swim, and had not Jeff Wardlaw, the new jackaroo, appeared on the scene, Skiff's earthly pilgrimage would have been over.

Jeff slipped off his coat and boots, and lightly clad in moleskins and shirt went to the rescue, and anyone who knows the treacherous weed lagoons "out west" understands that this is no easy or safe thing to do. But Wardlaw would have risked his life again every day of the year (in the same way), for the smile and thanks Barbara gave him when he returned the exhausted and half-drowned Skiff to his mistress's arms.

Jeff was handsome enough not to look ridiculous even with so much superfluous mud and water about him, and Rodwell felt with a queer sadness at his heart that to be insignificant and plain in looks is handicap enough in the race of life, without the added burden of a poverty-stricken youth, which had kept him bound to a musty desk, when he might he might have been learning to ride and swim and develop his muscles with the larger half of England's unthinking boyhood.

That happened a month ago, however, and now that the show was on in the little country town Rodwell had been more in it, for there were two balls, and he was a good

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dancer, which Jeff was not, and it almost seemed as if fickle Barbara's fancy was wavering again.

The day after the ball she was sitting with a girl friend in the station trap, watching the buck-jumping contest, in which, so far, the famous Outlaw from Mason's Creek had got the best of it, for he had kicked, and bitten, and plunged to so much purpose that no one had been able to mount him.

Barbara's friend hid her face in her hands and trembled, but Barbara watched the contest with glowing cheeks and excited blue eyes. The warm sun gleamed on her coils of red-brown hair beneath her white hat, and showed up the snowiness of her muslin frock.

"Oh," she cried, "how can they let The Outlaw beat them! Where is Mr. Wardlaw? He could ride it, I am sure."

Her girl friend gave a faint little shriek, for she, too, had felt the fascination of Jeff Wardlaw's individuality.

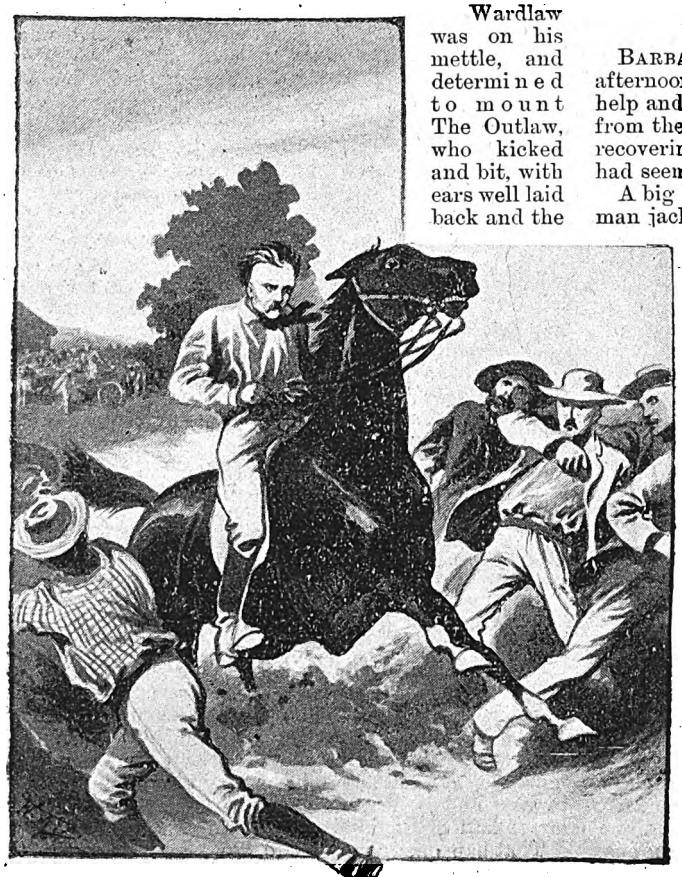
"Oh, Barbara, do not suggest such a thing! Why, it killed one man and disabled another for life, before they gave up trying to break the horse in," she said.

"What is the use of it all?" said Rodwell, who was leaning on the near wheel. "I should say discretion is the better part of valour in this case."

"There he is," cried Barbara as Jeff's tall figure appeared through the crowd. "I knew he would ride the horse."

There was a good deal of the primitive woman about Barbara.

Wardlaw was on his mettle, and determined to mount The Outlaw, who kicked and bit, with ears well laid back and the whites of as wicked an eye as ever a horse possessed showing dangerously. Jeff looked a fine fellow indeed as he battled with the animal, and the crowd yelled appreciatingly when, after a long struggle, he succeeded in swinging lightly into the saddle, and settled himself for the contest.



The crowd scattered right and left as the horse dashed through.

The Outlaw bucked, of course, but Jeff did not mind that; he could ride well. However, the horse seemed to go mad with rage at being beaten, and Barbara paled suddenly as, taking the bit in its teeth, The Outlaw playfully tried to rub Jeff off against the rails of the cattle pens, and then made a clean bolt for the river, which ran between rocky banks bordering the western end of the show ground.

The crowd scattered right and left as the horse dashed through, and then closed again to follow the mad flight. Barbara sprang out of the buggy and ran also.

However, more by good luck than good management, Jeff managed to get free, and threw himself off just as the horse plunged madly over the steep banks to be dashed on the rocks below. Jeff was only a little shaken and bruised, and told Rodwell to take Barbara away while they got a gun to end the miseries of the headstrong Outlaw. He was happy, indeed, for he had seen a look in the girl's blue eyes which told him his hopes were not in vain. And he was not mistaken, for Barbara admired courage more than any other quality.

"He is a plucky fellow," said Rodwell generously.

"He does not know what fear is," answered the girl.

II.

Barbara was alone on the station one Saturday afternoon, except for the company of a little half-caste help and a traveller who had arrived the night before from the township, and was resting in one of the huts, recovering from "the horrors" probably; at any rate, he had seemed too ill to move on.

A big bush fire having broken out unexpectedly, every man jack, from the boss to the Chinaman cook, was away helping to put it out. Being Saturday, the girls were busy, for, in spite of the cook's absence, dinner must be cooked for the jolliest night of the station week; and Barbara, with sleeves rolled up over her white, rounded arms, was deep in the mysteries of pastry.

The shadows were lengthening in the tangled, sweet-scented garden, and the station was so still that one could hear the splash of water as the colony of coots bathed in the rushy shallows of the creek, and the cooing voice of a scrub dove in the plantation of sheoaks near the stable.

The half-caste girl was crooning to herself in the back kitchen, singing her swan song, although she did not know it. Her mistress looked at the fire, and called out to the girl to bring some wood, and she obediently pattered out into the yard. Then Barbara heard a scream; not an ordinary shriek at all, but the sort you may hear if you ever happen to be on a sinking ship at the moment the deck slopes before the final plunge into the waters of death.

Barbara had never been in a shipwreck, but she knew the worst, whatever it was, had happened. Her heart leapt, and then seemed to stand still, as she ran to the door.

The tall, young half-caste lay in a tumbled

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heap beside her scattered armful of wood, her head strained unnaturally backwards, and a long, deep gash across the lean, yellow throat, from which the red blood was gushing. There was blood, too, on the long, sharp blade of the butcher's knife in the hands of the powerful-looking man who was stooping over her. He was a young fellow, with a negroish cast of features and lint-white hair, and she recognised him as the man who had begged a night's shelter the evening before, but he was changed now by the unmistakable glare of madness in the red-rimmed eyes.

The girl did not faint or scream; she knew that she was alone with the murderer on the station, and that her only safety lay in flight. Like most old station houses, Maxworth bolts and bars existed in name only. There was not one room which could be closely fastened in the whole building. No, she must try and reach the garden, and hide in the rushes of the creek until she could get unseen to the road, along which the men would soon be coming.

The half-caste was quite dead, she could see that, and, with the icy weight still at her heart, Barbara turned to steal away, and would have managed it successfully had not her pet kangaroo, who had been lying in the shade of the wood-heap, made a spring towards her, and so attracted the madman's attention.

Barbara fled towards the scullery and banged the door, and, with the strength born of despair, dragged the big safe across it. But she knew that her case was hopeless unless help came speedily; knew that before another half-hour was over mistress and maid would be on a more equal footing than ever before; that her beautiful white body could claim nothing better from the earth than the lean, unlovely one of the daughter of a despised race.

The man laughed wildly, and chattered to himself of spirits and the sacrifice. Before she could reach the one high window, the safe fell in with a crash, and the strange, white face, with its bloodshot eyes, was close to her. She ran behind the wide table, all her senses seemingly doubly alert, for she heard without noticing the splashing and twittering of the coots in the reedy shallows, and then the faint, even thud of horses' hoofs on the road which wound over the hollow ridge.

The horse plunged madly over the steep banks.

Ah! if she could only keep him at bay a little longer! He seemed about to spring across the table, but after a moment of indecision changed his mind, and, with a snarl of rage, threw his weight against it, striving to crush her against the wall, at which Barbara found her voice and sent a scream ringing through the house, for through the open window she had seen Jeff Wardlaw spring off his horse at the gate of the back-yard.

The madman made a sudden spring on to the table, and, seizing the girl by her hair, dragged her head backwards just as Wardlaw burst open the scullery door.

"The knife, the knife!" shrieked Barbara. "Take it from him!"

With the inconsistency of his kind, the lunatic turned and made a rush at Wardlaw. The latter saw Barbara's terrified, appealing eyes, but he saw also the sharp, unlifted knife, and a vision of that lean throat with its horrible gash he had seen in the back-yard blotted out the living woman's face.

He only knew that the madman was coming to kill him—to pull back his head with more than human

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"The knife, the knife!" shrieked Barbara. "Take it from him!"

strength—to cut deep into the stretched skin with that sharp knife!

Long afterwards he remembered how the look of terror in the girl's blue eyes was overlaid by a slow wonder and bitter scorn, as he fled in an overmastering panic—the lunatic close behind him, to where his horse was standing at the gate. He threw himself into the saddle, dug his spurs into the animal's sides, and urged it at full speed away from the long sharp knife and bloodthirsty eyes of that brute in human shape—and away also from the defenceless woman whom he loved.

Barbara was not killed, after all, for Wardlaw's flight kept the madman gesticulating and dancing after him for a minute or so, as he disappeared in a cloud of dust up the road, and the girl had time to steal away into the garden, and through the plantation on to the road at the back of the house, for, with a thrill of joy, she remembered that Rodwell was due from town at any moment, and her trembling limbs had not carried her far when she saw him riding leisurely along with the overseer, whom he had picked up at the boundary gate. I don't know whether his surprise or joy was the greater when he saw her running to meet him, but he knew that something distressing had happened when he saw her wild looks. Poor Barbara's over-strained nerves gave way when she saw his kindly face.

"The madman," she gasped: "he is at the house; he has killed poor Rosie," and then she fainted in Rodwell's protecting arms.

The two men carried her to the overseer's cottage, where she soon recovered, and then they went on to the house and succeeded in disarming the mad traveller and shutting him up in the harness room until the arrival of Barbara's father, who dispatched a man to town for the police.

Wardlaw did not return to Maxworth Downs except once to get his things and receive his cheques. Urgent news had met him in town recalling him to the south, so he said, and as Barbara kept a silent tongue, no one in Maxworth knew the real reason of his sudden departure. Years afterwards the weekly paper brought excitement to the old station, for it told how Jeff Wardlaw had received the Humane Society's medal for saving life under circumstances calling for unusual courage. And Barbara's plain-faced husband felt vaguely jealous as he watched her read the account; he could not interpret the look of mingled scorn and regret—as for a lost ideal—in those clear blue eyes.

And to his dying day Jeff Wardlaw will remember that same look in those same eyes, when he left the one woman he cared for to her fate—the one person on earth who knew him for a coward!

And yet Wardlaw knows that he was the sport of fate—of circumstances—call it what you will, and had the madman chosen any other weapon but cold steel Barbara would have been his beloved wife, and his "special fear" unknown to anyone but himself.

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WITH THE VIOLETS.

FOUR grey stone walls, strong and relentless as the grave, shut out the beauty of the southern night; but I know the moon is rising over the purple waters of the sea, for a white radiance is creeping to the broad edge of the grated window. It is so high, this cruel window! I cannot reach the bars, though on this, my last night on earth, I long for a glimpse of the sea—the beautiful sea which I have loved so well all my life.

"A short life," they will sigh, who read to-morrow on my coffin-lid: "Elinor Delamere, *ætat* twenty-three."

I asked Paul this morning to have *Resurgam* engraved on the marble slab which will mark my last resting-place. A mere fancy of mine, for I know, past all doubting, I shall rise again. Violet knows it also, but if she comes some day to stand in the twilight by my tomb, it will be as if my voice speaks to her when she reads that word in the marble. She may feel sorry and forgive me then. If she could let fall a tear above my dust, perhaps a cluster of violets would spring up among the blood-red roses that grow out of my dead heart.

This bunch that lies on my breast to-night Paul plucked for me in the dear old nook known to us alone. The bonny things are faded. It is curious that a violet will not live with me, when I love them so. But their season is ending now; after to-morrow there will be no more violets in Martinique. Though they will not live with me, I am to die with them.

How bright the moonlight is. Is it moonlight—that tremulous, silver sheen which clings so softly to the black bars, and falls athwart the damp floor in a broad band of glory? See! As I watch it, fascinated, out of it, pale and stilly, grows a face. Leon—Leon! He smiles at me in the old way, and keeps his hand over his heart, that I may not see the cruel wound. So I have seen him, night after night, for six long months. Not yet, Leon! In the grey dawn my soul will keep tryst with yours in the beyond. But I must leave this story for Paul to read when he comes to say farewell and finds me gone. Poor Paul, who would die in my stead if he could.

It is gone, that beautiful face. Only the moonlight still trembles across the bars, and a breeze of the waning night lifts the hair on my forehead. The winds of memory are blowing over my soul. I hear the ripple of a far-off sea rising above the sound of the breakers that dash against the rugged cliffs of Martinique.

Oh, to stand once more with Leon on that stretch of yellow sand, and watch the turn of the tide at the headland, far away where the white sails gleam! No sea is so blue as this of my dreams—no sky so sunny and cloudless. Through all the long aeons, reaching back to the beginning of this earthly pilgrimage, memory shows no picture so fair in my eyes. What have I ever wanted in all the waste of centuries save Leon—only Leon, whom in this life I met too late?

I saw him for the first time in a crowd. His face dawned upon me like a star, and a restless fever swept my soul. In the flash of a moment I recognised him—I, Paul Delamere's wife.

Oh, love of the long ago! Mine from the very first, when our souls were struck out as twin sparks of divine fire from the infinite glory! It is barely seven months since our lines crossed so strangely—so tragically—in this flower-haunted island, set like a gem in southern waters.

Violet—my Violet—was with me. Violet Delamere, with hair like burnished gold, and eyes the same shade as the flower for which she was named. My hair is golden, too, but not like hers, and I have eyes to match—tigerish eyes, Leon called them. Did he remember, I wonder, those old, old days when we roamed the tangled jungles of India together. Some of that wild blood runs in my veins still.

Violet is tall and stately as a lily. Six months ago I was her dearest friend; but friendship is a flower of fragile growth. It has no depth of root, and earth frosts blight it easily. I would have laid down my life any day for Violet; but Leon was my soul. I could not give him to her.

I think Paul was forgotten just at first. We lived in a happy dream, marred by no thought of an awakening. It seemed to me those days must last for ever—that Leon and I would go on drifting with that deceptive tide which was steadily bearing us out to sea, though we knew it not. The first hint of danger came from Violet.

"Elinor," she said one day, while I sat waiting for Leon, who was to drive with me, "what is to be the end of this flirtation with Leon Vincent?"

A flirtation! So that was the way it looked to Violet—this recognition between two souls, adrift in the desert. As I glanced up at her, for the first time I noticed how pale and wan was the sweet face, how full of brooding shadows the beautiful eyes.

"Violet," I cried sharply, "you are ill, dear—your face is like snow. What has become of all your lovely colour?"

And then a chill of fear struck cold to my heart, for she sank at my feet and hid her face against my knee, like a desolate child. I felt her sobs jar my inmost soul, and though I wished to lay my hand caressingly on her rippling hair, something checked me—I know not what.

"What is it, Violet?" I asked, sitting there like a statue.

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Was it a surprise, the story she told me when she could command her voice? I cannot tell, but the old pain is heavy at my heart as I recall her confession. She fancied herself in love with Leon, poor child! What curious conception of love these earthlings have! The surface of the water is rippled by every passing breeze; but the storm that stirs it to the depths comes but rarely.

"Leave him to me, dear Elinor," she pleaded, lifting her eyes to mine. The tears stood thickly on the long lashes, but she brushed them off and clasped my hands tightly. "End this wicked flirtation, my sister. You are breaking Paul's heart as well as mine. Have you not noticed the terrible change in him since Leon came? He is dying, Elinor, and it is you who are killing him. Why are you so strangely unlike yourself? There is a look in your face at times that fills me with dread. Cease trifling with Leon—he will turn to me if you will let him. Oh, Elinor, Elinor, listen—he is nothing to you!"

I laughed—I could not help it. Nothing to me, Leon, my other self! If Violet could have looked back through the silence of all the centuries that have elapsed since we begun this pilgrimage of earth, she would not have said that. She shrank from me when I laughed, and then I heard Leon's step and we went off together.

On the way we passed Paul, and though he smiled at me as usual, I could not help seeing how haggard and worn he looked. Violet's words had opened my eyes, perhaps.

What was it Leon read in my face as I turned to him once more when Paul's form was lost in the distance? To this day I cannot remember how it happened; the understanding between us had been mutual, yet silent. My heart stood still when Leon checked the horses in the shadow of the acacia hedge, just where the Veva river flows down to meet the sea. An old bridge crosses the stream a little beyond. He helped me from the carriage, and we walked thither together. Not a word had been said, but a hand of ice seemed to touch my soul.

I dared not meet the look in Leon's eyes. The dream was passed, the awakening had come. I knew it before the silence.

"Elinor," he said simply, "I am going to ask Violet Delamere to be my wife."

I raised my head and looked at him then—a long, level look that read his soul as easily as one reads a printed page. Ah, yes, the dream was at an end—that brief, beautiful dream! He caught my hands in his and held them; his breath swept my cheek; his eyes burnt into mine.

"Must it be, Elinor," he whispered, "or will you lose the world for my sake and come with me across the sea to the land of the purple grapes that haunts your dreaming moments? My Elinor, what is the world to us, who only want each other? You are mine, and mine alone. I claim you, dear; I will never give you up!"

My heart was breaking, but I met his gaze with one calm, steady, and dauntless. I had to be strong for both.

"Leon," I said gently, "I belong in this life to Paul. In wedding him I did him an irreparable wrong; but I will not add to my guilt—I will not break his heart."

"Then I shall marry Violet," said Leon, dropping my hands and turning his face away.

I knew then what I had to do—I heard it in the moan of the sea below the cliffs; but I gave him one more chance.

"You do not love her, Leon," I said, clasping both hands over his arm. "Will you wrong the sister as I have wronged the brother? Oh, Leon! are you no nobler than this?"

He would not listen to my pleading. He turned his face towards the mountains, where opaline mists clung so heavily that their summits were invisible. A moaning wind crept up from the sea as we stood there, sweeping across our faces the heavy perfume from the blossoming acacias.

"I shall marry Violet," Leon reiterated, and suddenly clasped me in his arms.

It was then I stabbed him with the little Italian dagger I always wore thrust through the masses of my hair. Ah, I knew well where to find his heart! I could not give him up to Violet.

I knelt on the ground, supporting his head, and he smiled at me, though the beautiful eyes were glazing fast, and his breath came in faint gasps. My hand clung to his.

"Such a little hand," he whispered painfully, "to give a blow so fatal! Adios, Elinor, till we meet again."

A breath, a sigh, and he was gone. I let his lifeless head fall gently back upon the turf, and arose to stand face to face with Paul.

Do you think he shrank from me when he saw that still form at my feet, and my white dress all crimson dyed? You do not know Paul. He is the noblest, truest soul in all the world. He is a saint—a martyr. My crime made no difference in his love, and he would have saved me even then. He said I was insane—that all my fancies concerning Leon were proof of my madness. And Violet said so, too; but I laughed at them both. They knew nothing of the ages that we passed together, Leon and I. How should they?

Six months have elapsed since first I crossed the threshold of this gloomy cell. Paul says I am in a refuge for the insane, but I know it is a prison, and that I have been tried for my life, and found guilty. The scaffold of death stands black and sinister out there in the white moonlight, waiting for Elinor Delamere to climb its steps in the grey dawn. Yes, I am to die with the violets; but no hempen cord will ever touch my throat. Paul will find but my breathless form when he comes for that last leave-taking; my soul will be in the beyond with Leon, who awaits me.

I should like to look once more on Violet's face ere I slip into the unknown. Horror and despair were written in her eyes when I saw her last. It was the day Leon died. I cannot blame the child, yet I am not sorry for what I did. Leon could not belong to two, and if Violet knew all she would thank me—of this I am sure. Dear little Violet! I have loved her since that far-off life when she was but a tiny blossom bearing that name and I a blood rose, drinking the same dews, kissed by the same sunbeams in that lovely Moorish garden beyond the sea. She will find some day the twin violet that blossomed with her there, and Paul will claim his eagle mate. When the time comes, no one will grudge me my Leon.

Leon, Leon! How that one name repeats itself over and over in my soul! The dawn is almost here. The first grey streak that strikes aslant the black bars brings me release. When sunrise lies like a crimson glory on land and sea, I shall be sleeping with the violets. Adios, Paul, dear Paul!

GRACE PARKER.

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100,000 PRIZES.

A PRIZE FOR EVERY COMPETITOR.

1	Prize of	ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.
1	„	FIFTY POUNDS.
1	„	TWENTY POUNDS.
5,000	Prizes of	Handsome Watches.
5,000	„	Ladies' Companions.
5,000	„	Sporting Knives.
5,000	„	Hair Brushes.
5,000	„	Hand Mirrors.
5,000	„	Silver Brooches.
5,000	„	Gold-Plated Pencil-cases.
5,000	„	Silver Bangles.
5,000	„	Penknives.
5,000	„	Pen and Pencil Boxes (3 deckers.)
10,000	„	Paint Boxes.
10,000	„	Boxes of Dominoes.
10,000	„	Pearl and Porcupine Penholders.
10,000	„	Compasses.
10,000	„	Boxes of Crayons.
20	Prizes of	ONE POUND each.
20	„	TEN SHILLINGS each.

From now until November 25th a coupon will appear on the front page of cover of SHORT STORIES, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES (May 27th), and PASTIMES. To the person who collects the greatest number of these coupons and sends them to us on a date we shall specify later, we will give the sum of One Hundred Pounds; to the collector of the second greatest number we will give Fifty Pounds, and so on until the whole 100,043 prizes have been awarded.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

This is the only competition that has ever been devised in which every competitor will get a prize.

All the articles enumerated above are of the best make and well worth possessing, therefore no prize will be given to any person who sends fewer than 200 coupons.

The prizes altogether will cost us about £10,000.

Ask any friend of yours who reads our papers to give you his coupons.

The Competition will run for twenty-nine weeks. If the members of your family take in "P.W.," "H.N.," "S.S.," and "Pastimes," and you collect the coupons from each, this will give you 114 coupons. You can easily obtain from your friends the balance to make up the 200, in which case you will be certain of getting a prize.

A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss fire. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same, your 200 coupons would win you £100.

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A PRETTY French peasant girl began the working of it, sitting under the shade of green vines in sunny France. Her lover was far over the sea. Adele came of a family of lace-makers, and she said to herself:

"I'll work my own bridal veil in my holiday time, and then when Arthur comes to marry me, shall I not be a fair, gay bride? No lady's veil shall be finer."

But Arthur came to claim her long before the veil was finished, and she married him—her young English lover as poor as herself—and went with him to England. The veil went with them, packed away at the bottom of a trunk, and—forgotten.

It lay forgotten for twelve years, until a lovely little ten-year-old fairy broke its long sleep at last.

She had dark eyes, like the little French lace-maker of old, but she had the English golden hair—Arthur's own.

"Oh, the pretty lace!" she cried, clapping her hands, and dancing with delight as Adele shook it out of its folds. "May I have it for a wedding-dress for my dolly, mamma?"

The pretty matron laughed and shook her head as she pressed the delicate fabric to her lips. Then she told the child the story of its making.

"I will finish it for you," she said, "and then, when the time comes for my little Victorine to be a bride, she will have a veil to be proud of."

So again the pretty taper fingers toiled busily over the delicate lace, and masses of graceful flowers and fairy-like ferns grew steadily under them.

Little Victorine watched the progress of the work with keenest interest.

"Mamma, teach me to work it," she said one day. "My fingers are ever so much finer and tinier than yours!"

So she began to work a veil for her doll, and the facility with which she learnt the graceful work was surprising. At the age of fifteen she was so expert that Adele allowed her to take part in the creation of the wonderful veil itself.

But as they only worked at it by fits and starts, as the fancy seized them, it was still unfinished when Victorine was seventeen, and Henri Riviere came a-wooing her.

Henri came of noble blood, and was well-to-do. His parents had left him some money; not enough to live upon in idle luxury, but enough to give him a fair start in business life. Knowing that in Paris his noble relatives would not scruple to oppose such a course as he had decided on, he chose London as the scene of his efforts, and commenced business as a merchant there.

The young people had "met by chance, the usual way," and the fact that Victorine's mother came from France had been a bond between them from the first. Now, after a year's acquaintance, Henri declared his love, and the coming spring was to see their happy wedding.

Then Adele set to work in earnest to finish the bridal veil.

"I tell you, Monsieur Riviere, no lady of your proud house evere wore lace more exquisite and rich," said she. "And shall I not be proud, when I see my daughter in her marriage robes; and think of the poor little peasant girl of long ago, who toiled at the lace to earn coarse, black bread, so far away over the sea!"

Henri turned quickly at those words.

"What peasant girl was that, madame?" he questioned uneasily.

"Myself!" she answered pleasantly, never noticing his look or tone. "What was I but a poor little peasant lace-maker, when my generous young lover, the father of Victorine, married me?"

Henri made no answer, but his haughty family pride had received a blow.

"A lace-maker!" he said to himself. "A peasant girl! If I had but known it sooner!"

And this knowledge of his bride's humble extraction so annoyed him that he became irritable, impatient, fretful; and finally he conceived an absurd but violent dislike to the bridal veil.

"I hate the sight of it!" he cried one evening, when he and Victorine were alone.

"For goodness' sake, if you love me, never work at it in my presence, dear Victorine. And if I dared ask a special favour of you, it should be—"

He paused, frightened at his own imprudence; she sat listening in great surprise.

"Well?" she said. "It should be—?"

"Wear any other veil in the world but that one to be married in."

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She folded up her work very quietly and deliberately, though with trembling hands. She had wondered, of late, at a strange and subtle change in her lover; now she began to ask herself was she going to learn its cause? She said, with forced calmness:

"That is a singular favour. Are you aware that my dear mother worked this veil?"

The hot, impulsive temper answered hastily, and without second thought:

"That is the very reason that I hate it!"

And then she understood him. The daughter of England had been slow to comprehend the pride of this French aristocrat, but she saw all clearly now. She marry the man who thought he stooped to take her! not though her heart broke!

Henri had aroused a pride as stubborn as his own, though of quite a different nature.

Gently, but firmly, she said to him:

"You did not know, when first you sought me, that mamma was a poor lace-maker in France. Since you have known it you have regretted our engagement. Do not speak. I have seen a change in you. I know that this is so. But there is no harm done," she held out to him a little trembling hand; "since I learn this before it is too late. I will grant you the favour you ask." Here he would have kissed the trembling hand, but she drew it quickly away.

"Your bride shall never wear my darling mother's veil, because I shall never be your bride!"

No need to dwell upon what followed. His prayers, his protestations, humble at first, then angry, his tears, they had no power to change her resolution.

And so at last they parted coldly, lovers still at heart—for ah, love dies not easily—but outwardly seeming scarcely friends.

She stood proudly as he left the room, but when the sound of the closing door struck like the knell of hope on her passionate young heart, she sunk down upon the floor, sobbing wildly:

"My love! Oh, my love! And I have lost him!"

Her parents questioned in vain. She had quarrelled with Henri; that was all that she would tell them. And before time or chance for reconciliation came, her mother was stricken with mortal sickness, and in three days lay dead; and Victorine, quite overwhelmed by grief, was prostrated with an attack of brain fever.

And at this very juncture a summons came from France, demanding Henri's immediate presence.

Strange changes had been happening there. Three lives that stood between him and the title and estates of the Marquis de la Riviere had been suddenly swept away, and so they sent for him, the heir.

At first his heart swelled with exultation, but it sank again. Victorine! had he not lost her?

"I care for neither rank nor wealth unless she shares them!" he cried. "I will go and once more implore her pardon."

But Victorine was lying dangerously ill, and he was not allowed to see her. Go he must, and a few weeks after arriving in Paris he wrote, informing her fully of his altered fortunes, and imploring her to forgive, and accept once more as her true lover, the Marquis de la Riviere.

But she never got the letter.

The house to which it came was empty.

The once happy home was broken up; the husband and father had followed Adele to a better world; and their child, for whom husband, title, and fortune were waiting in sunny France, was earning sorrowful bread as a lace-maker.

So the Marquis waited for an answer in vain; until after many months his own letter was returned to him through the Dead Letter Office.

It came like a messenger of hope. So! She had not refused to answer him, as he had thought.

The next day saw him starting for London.

Need I describe his welcome there, or tell of the crowds that flocked to claim acquaintance with "the Marquis?" But none could tell him anything of Victorine, except the story of her sorrows.

And after three months' search he had failed to find her. He had money, influence, deepest heart-interest to aid the search, yet it failed.

One evening he made one of a party of a tableaux vivants (for he had to go into Society sometimes, however little he liked it), and the particular tableau in which he took part was that of a wedding. Suddenly one of the buttons on his cuff caught in the bride's lace veil. In an instant he had recognised that once-hated lace—it was Victorine's bridal veil!

"I borrowed it of a lace-maker," the lady who wore it explained. "I would have bought it, but she would not sell. It was her mother's work."

"A young girl?" he gasped.

"Oh, no, indeed! A poor, thin, jaded creature, with fine eyes, certainly, but ill and worn. I shall be glad to give you her address if you have work for her. I am sure she needs it."

Well, she never needed for anything after that night; love and happiness came to her in bounteous measure, and stayed with her forever afterward.

Pale, and thin, and somewhat careworn still, was the bride of the Marquis on her wedding day; but in his eyes—the eyes of true and faithful love—it was still the sweetest face in all the world that smiled under Adele's bridal veil.

And the Marquis kissed the lace and blessed it, because through it he had found her again.

"I love it now!" he cried. "It shall be kept as a precious treasure, always."

And so it was. Many a fair and high-born bride wore "the bridal veil of Riviere" in the years to come; but among them all none were more truly blest than the poor lace-maker, whose mother was a peasant girl, but who for true love's sake and for love alone, was chosen by her faithful lover to be Madame la Marquise de la Riviere.

BERTHA HILL.

AN absent-minded woman, mistaking herself for the tea-kettle, filled herself up with water, and sat down on the stove to boil. She discovered her mistake soon after.

A SUBURBAN FOX-HUNT.—Huntsman: "I say, farmer, did you see a fox running this way a little while ago?"

Farmer: "Yes, I did. The last I seed of him he was a-running up the railway lines as quick as he could."

Huntsman (thoughtfully): "We must take the next train, or we shall never catch the brute."

IT was little Dot's first visit to a farm, and she went with her aunt to see how the pigs were fed. The little one gazed in astonishment at the young porkers for a moment, and then placing her hand on her curly hair, she said reflectively:

"Aunty?"

"Yes, dear."

"Does 'oo put all the piggies' tails in curl papers?"

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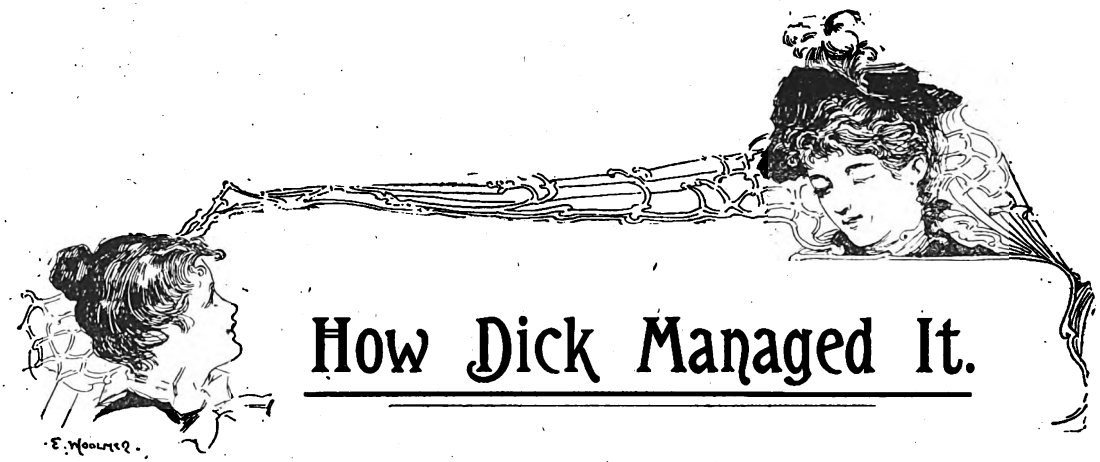

How Dick Managed It.

THEY sat at the same table at the Oxford Street branch of the Inflated Bread Company. She was young, fair, and pretty. He was tall, squarely-built, dark, good-looking, and about twenty-five.

"Will you allow me, madam?"

"Oh, certainly, but you won't find much mustard in the cruet."

"The warmth of your politeness will make up the deficiency."

"Sir!"

"Madam, I mean what I say."

A moment's pause.

"Will you permit me to return the cruet—and thank you."

Another pause.

"You have dropped your gloves; madam, allow me."

"Oh, thank you!"

She blushed.

"I'm grateful to you for this pleasure. I am always delighted to find you here. Not annoyed, I hope?"

"It's rude to stare."

"When mere curiosity is the motive. I have a different feeling."

"What's the difference? You don't know me."

"I know you now, I claim."

"But the circumstance of our meeting forbids acquaintance outside."

"Not unless you desire it."

Yet another pause.

"You are only curious."

"Curiosity, madam, is a precarious condition, because it is subject to much suspicion. Mine is a different feeling altogether, and it prompts me to ask you to know me outside. May I claim the privilege?"

They paid their bills and went forth.

"Why do you want to know me? Is there anything interesting about me?" And a pathetic smile lit up her face.

"To answer you truthfully, there is. May I breathe its sacred name? It is Love."

"But you mustn't love me!" she cried.

"I didn't say that."

"You said so just now."

"I apologise for the misunderstanding. I couldn't love you."

"What a strange man!" she thought.

"I would do anything for you; I would live for you—die for you. No, no, I wouldn't do that, but I would go to the uttermost corner of the world for you, but you could never succeed in winning my love."

"Oh this is interesting; I want more of it. Are you engaged?"

"In the day-time, yes, and sometimes at night. I am a journalist."

"To be married, I mean."

"There is no such obligation hanging about my neck, although I am in love."

"Then she does not return your love?"

He heaved a heavy sigh.

"I love her passionately. She is all in all to me—we live for each other—sigh and pine for each other, but we daren't think of marrying."

"How sad, very."

They both sighed.

"She is as good as dead to me."

"How sad—very sad."

"Her sister is the principal objector to my suit."

"Shameful!"

"But what she objects to in me I don't know."

"Nor I."

"I beg pardon——"

"I said, nor I."

"This lady knows me only by a false reputation. She does not know me personally, and yet she refuses to be introduced to me. I don't know the nature of the grudge she has against me."

"Oh, jealously, because she hasn't her sister's chances."

She sneered.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, my sex are very funny in things of that sort."

"We have to have recourse to the agony columns to exchange our love passages."

"Dreadful!"

"And it is so expensive, besides being inconvenient."

"Do you know her sister?"

"By sight, yes. Read this."

He showed her an agony column part, "Vera to Dick. Like ivy I cling to thee; yours till death; mater ill; must see you; say where."

"How strange. My sister's name is Vera, and she's engaged to a gentleman named Dick. And my mother's ill, too."

They had arrived at the Marble Arch.

"Let me win your sympathy, Miss Hill. I am your sister's Dick, and I want you to be my sister."

Dick and Vera were married the following August.

MULVY OUSELEY.

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THE HOUSE OF A TRAITOR.

As you leave Porte Vecchio and go north-west towards the interior of Corsica, the land rises rapidly, and, after three hours' travelling through winding paths, obstructed by huge rocks and often cut by deep ravines, you find yourself on the edge of an extensive *maquis*. The *maquis* is the country of the Corsican shepherds, and of those who are at enmity with justice.

You must know that the Corsican labourer, in order to spare himself the trouble of manuring his fields, sets fire to a certain extent of wooded land. So much the worse if the flame spreads farther than is necessary, but then he is sure to have a fine harvest when he sows his seed in this soil fertilised by the ashes of the trees it once bore.

The grain reaped and carried away (for they leave the straw, which it would be troublesome to gather), the old roots, which have remained in the earth unconsumed by the flames, shoot forth in the following spring very thick branches, which in a few years attain a height of seven or eight feet. It is this kind of heavy underbrush that goes by the name of *maquis*. A man can only open a passage through it axe in hand, and *maquis* have been known so thick and bushy that the mountain sheep themselves cannot get through.

If you have killed a man, fly to the *maquis* of Porte Vecchio, and you will live there in safety, provided with a good gun, powder, and ball, and a brown cowled cloak, which will serve as both mattress and covering.

The shepherds will give you milk, and cheese, and chestnuts, and you will have nothing to fear from justice or the relations of the defunct, except when you will be obliged to go to town to renew your ammunition.

Mateo Falcone, when I was in Corsica, lived about half a league from this *maquis*. He was quite rich for that country, living "nobly," in Corsican phrase (that is to say, without working himself), from the produce of his flocks, which the shepherds, a kind of nomadic race, pastured here and there in the mountains. His skill in shooting passed for something extraordinary, even in that country, where there are so many good shots.

His wife had brought him at first three daughters (to his great rage), and finally a son, whom he named Fortunato.

He was the hope of the family, the heir to his name. The girls were all well married; their father could reckon upon the daggers and carbines of his sons-in-law. The boy was only ten years old, but of a promising character.

One fine day in autumn Mateo went early with his wife to visit one of his flocks in a clearing in the *maquis*.

The little Fortunato desired to go with him, but the clearing was too far off, and, besides, someone must remain to guard the house. So the father refused.

He had been gone some hours, and little Fortunato was lying quietly in the sun gazing at the blue mountains and thinking how he was going to dine next Sunday in the town with his uncle, when his meditations were suddenly interrupted by a shot. He jumped up and turned towards the side of the plain whence proceeded the noise. Several shots followed at irregular intervals, approaching nearer and nearer, till suddenly, in the path which led from the plain to Mateo's house, appeared a man wearing a pointed cap, such as the mountaineers wore; he was covered with rags and dragged himself painfully along, leaning on his gun. He had just been shot in the thigh.

This man was an outlaw, who, having gone during the night to buy powder in the town, had, on his way fallen into an ambush of Corsican police. After a vigorous defence he had succeeded in making good his retreat, hotly pursued and firing from rock to rock. But he was not far in advance of the soldiers, and his wound made it impossible for him to reach the *maquis* before being caught.

He approached Fortunato, and said to him: "You are the son of Mateo Falcone?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"I am Giannetto Sanpiero. The soldiers are after me. Hide me, for I can go no farther."

"But what will my father say if I hide you without his permission?"

"He will say you have done well."

"Who knows?"

"Hide me quickly. They are coming."

"Wait until my father comes back."

"You are not Mateo Falcone's son. Will you let me be arrested before the door of your house?"

The child appeared moved with compassion.

"What will you give me if I hide you?" said he, drawing nearer.

The outlaw fumbled in a leathern pocket which hung from his belt and drew from it a five-franc piece, which he had doubtless saved for the purchase of powder. Fortunato smiled at the sight of money, and, seizing it, said to Giannetto:

"Fear nothing. I will hide you well."

Then he made a great hole in a heap of straw near the house. Giannetto crawled in and the child covered him up so as to leave him a little air to breathe without it being possible to suspect, at a casual glance, that this heap of straw could hide a man. Moreover, with a cunning ingenuity worthy of a savage, he caught a cat and her kittens and placed them on the top of the straw as if it had not been moved for some time. Finally noticing traces of blood on the path, he carefully covered them with dust and then calmly lay down again in the sun.

A few moments after six men, in brown uniforms with yellow collars, and commanded by an adjutant, were before Mateo's door. This adjutant was a distant relation to Falcone. He was called Teodoro Gamba, an active man, much feared by the outlaws, of whom he had already captured several.

"How do you do, little cousin?" said he, smiling, to Fortunato. "How you have grown? Have you seen a man pass here lately?"

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"This morning M. le Curé rode by our door on his horse, Teodoro. He asked me how papa was, and I told him."

"Ha! little villain; you are playing the rogue. Tell me quickly which way Giannetto went, for it is he I am after, and I am certain he took this path."

"Who knows?"

"Who knows?" roared the adjutant; "I know that you have seen him."

"Can one see all the passers-by when one is asleep?"

"Confound you; I am very sure you have seen Giannetto. Perhaps you have even hidden him. Comrades, go into the house and see if our man is not there. He was dragging along on one foot, and he knows too much, the rogue, to try and reach the *maquis* while limping in that manner. Besides, the marks of blood stop here."

"And what will papa say," asked Fortunato, "when he knows people have entered his house when he was absent?"

"Rascal!" said the adjutant, seizing him by the ear, "do you know that I can make you sing another tune? After I have given you twenty blows with the flat of a sword you will speak."

"My father is Mateo Falcone," said Fortunato, with emphasis.

Gamba was evidently embarrassed. He talked in a low voice with his men, who had already searched the house. It was not a lengthy operation, for the cabin of a Corsican contains but a single square room.

The furniture consists of a table, some benches, a chest or two, and hunting and cooking utensils. Meanwhile the little boy played with the kittens, and seemed to take a malicious joy in the evident confusion of his cousin and the soldiers.

"Little cousin," said the former, "you seem a very wideawake fellow; you'll make your mark; but you are playing an ugly game with me, and if I was not afraid of giving pain to my cousin Mateo I would carry you off with me."

"Bah!" said the child.

"But when my cousin Mateo returns I shall relate the whole affair to him, and he will whip you for having lied to me."

"Really!"

"You will see. But hold—you are a fine boy, and I will give you something."

The adjutant drew from his pocket a silver watch worth about ten crowns, and observing that the eyes of the child sparkled as he looked at it, he said to him, holding the watch dangling by its steel chain:

"Would not you be delighted to have a watch like that hanging from your neck? You would walk the streets of Porte Vecchio as proud as a peacock; and when people would ask you: 'What's o'clock?' then you would say: 'Look at my watch and find out.'"

"When I am a big boy my uncle will give me a watch."

"Yes, but your uncle's son already has one: not as handsome as this, to be sure; but then he is younger than you."

The child sighed, and said with a bitter smile:

"Why do you joke with me?"

"I am not joking; only tell me where Giannetto is, and the watch is yours."

Fortunato smiled incredulously, and, fixing his black eyes on those of the adjutant, he tried to read there how much to believe of what he said.

"May I lose my epaulets," cried the adjutant, "if I do not give you this watch provided you do as I ask. My men are witnesses, and I cannot retract my promise."

As he spoke he held the watch nearer, so that it almost touched the child's face. Fortunato showed plainly in his face the struggle in his soul between covetousness and the respect due to hospitality. However, the watch continued to turn and twist about, and sometimes struck the end of his nose. Finally, little by little, his right hand rose slowly towards the watch, the end of his fingers touched it, and he felt its weight before the adjutant dropped the end of the chain. The dial-plate was sky blue, the case newly polished, and, in the sun, it shone like fire. The temptation was too strong.

Fortunato raised his left hand slowly, and pointed with his thumb over his left shoulder at the heap of straw. The adjutant instantly understood the gesture. He let go the end of the chain, and Fortunato felt himself sole possessor of the watch. He arose, and ran a few steps from the heap of straw, which the soldiers commenced immediately to overturn.

It was not long before a man, covered with blood, poniard in hand, crawled out, but as he tried to rise to his feet his wounded thigh did not allow him to stand erect. He fell, and the adjutant threw himself upon him and seized his stiletto, and he was soon securely tied, despite his struggles. Lying on the ground, and bound up like a faggot, Giannetto turned his head towards Fortunato and hissed, "Son of a dog!" The child tossed back the five-franc piece Giannetto had given him, feeling that he had ceased to deserve it, but the outlaw paid no attention to this movement.

While the soldiers were employed, some in making a kind of litter out of branches and the others in dressing Giannetto's wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared at the turn of a path which led to the *maquis*. The woman walked slowly, bending painfully under the weight of an enormous sack of chestnuts, while her husband strolled by her side, carrying only his two guns, one in his hand, the other in his shoulder belt, for it is unworthy of a Corsican to carry any burden but his arms.

As he caught sight of the soldiers, his first idea was that they had come to arrest him. But why? Had Mateo any trouble with the law? No; he enjoyed a good reputation; but he was a Corsican and a mountaineer, and there are few such who, in searching their memory, cannot recall some peccadilloes, such as gunshots, dagger thrusts, and other like trifles. Mateo, more than most men, had a clear conscience in this respect; for more than ten years he had aimed his gun at no man. He was, however, prudent, and he took a position to make a brave defence, if necessary.

"Wife," said he to Guiseppa, "put down your sack and be ready."

She obeyed immediately. He gave her the gun from his shoulder-belt, which might cramp his movements. He then loaded the one he held and advanced slowly towards his house, skirting the [illegible] which bordered the road, ready, at the least hostile demonstration of the soldiers, to throw himself behind the largest trunk, whence he could fire under shelter. His wife followed in his tracks, holding the spare gun and its cartridge-box—the business of a good housewife is to load her husband's gun in case of a combat.

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On the other side of the field the adjutant was much troubled at seeing Mateo advance in this manner, with measured steps, gun in hand, and his finger on the trigger.

"If, perchance," thought he, "Mateo should be a relative to Giannetto, and he wished to defend him, the contents of his two guns could reach us, one after the other, as sure as a letter by the post, notwithstanding our relationship." In this perplexity he took the brave resolution to advance toward Mateo and relate the whole affair to him, accosting him as an old friend; but the short distance that separated him from Mateo appeared terribly long.

"Ah, my brave comrade," cried he, "how goes it? It is I, Gamba, your cousin."

Mateo, without replying, had stopped, and, while the other spoke, slowly raised the barrel of his gun so that it pointed to the sky at the instant the adjutant reached him.

"Good-day, comrade," said the adjutant. "We have just seized Giannetto Sanpiero."

"Heaven be praised!" cried Giuseppa; "he stole a milch goat from us last week."

These words rejoiced Gamba.

"Poor beggar," said Mateo, "he was hungry."

"The knave fought like a lion," continued the adjutant, somewhat mortified; "he killed two of my men. Afterwards he was hidden so finely that I should never have discovered him had it not been for my little cousin Fortunato."

"Fortunato!" exclaimed Mateo.

"Fortunato," said Gamba, "yes; Giannetto was hidden under that heap of straw yonder. But my little cousin showed me his hiding-place. So I will tell his uncle in town, and he will send him a fine present for his trouble. And his name and yours will appear in the report that I shall send to the Governor."

"So?" said Mateo.

They had reached the detachment by this time. Giannetto was already lying on the litter, and ready to depart. When he saw Mateo in Gamba's company he smiled strangely, then, turning his head towards the door of the house, he spit savagely on the sill, crying: "The house of a traitor."

Only a man who had resolved to die would have dared to use the word "traitor" in connection with Falcone. A stab from a stiletto would have immediately avenged the insult. But Mateo made no other gesture than carrying his hand to his head as if overcome with grief. Fortunato had gone into the house when he saw his father arrive; but he soon reappeared, carrying a bowl of milk, which he offered to the prisoner, his head hanging down.

"Away, cur," cried the outlaw to him. Then, turning to one of the guard: "Comrade," said he, "give me a drink."

The soldier handed him his gourd, and Giannetto drank the water given him by a man with whom he had just exchanged shots. Then the adjutant gave the signal of departure, bade adieu to Mateo, who did not reply, and they descended with rapid steps toward the plain.

Ten minutes passed before Mateo opened his mouth. The child glanced uneasily sometimes at his mother, then at his father, who, leaning on his gun, looked at him with an expression of furious anger.

"You begin well," said Mateo finally, in a calm voice, but a terrible one to whoever knew the man thoroughly.

"My father!" cried the child, advancing, tears in his eyes, as if to throw himself at his knees. But Mateo cried: "Back!" and he stopped, sobbing, and motionless, a few steps from his father.

Giuseppa drew near. She had just perceived the chain of the watch, one end of which hung from Fortunato's shirt.

"Who gave you that watch?" she asked, in a severe tone.

"My cousin, the adjutant."

Falcone seized the watch, and throwing it violently against a stone, broke it into a thousand pieces.

"This child," he cried furiously, "is the first of the race of Falcone who has been guilty of treachery."

The tears and sobs of Fortunato redoubled, and Mateo kept his eyes sternly fixed upon him. Finally he struck the butt end of his gun to the ground, threw it over his shoulder, and took his way towards the *maquis*, bidding Fortunato to follow him. The child obeyed.

Giuseppa ran after Mateo and seized his arm. "He is your son," said she in a trembling voice, fixing her black eyes on those of her husband as if to read there what was passing in his soul.

"Leave me," said Mateo; "I am his father."

The mother embraced her son and entered the house weeping. Throwing herself on her knees before an image of the Virgin she prayed fervently.

Meanwhile Falcone walked down the path some two hundred paces and stopped on reaching a little ravine. He sounded the earth and found it soft and easy for digging.

"Fortunato," said he, "stand yonder near that great stone."

The child obeyed and fell on his knees.

"Say your prayers," said Falcone.

"My father, my father, do not kill me!"

"Say your prayers," said Mateo, in a voice which made the child's flesh creep.

The child, sobbing and stammering, repeated the "Pater Noster," and the "Credo." At the end of each prayer the stern father responded "Amen."

"Are those all the prayers you know?" asked he.

"My father, I also know the 'Ave Maria,' and the Litany my aunt taught me."

"Repeat them."

The child finished the Litany in a sinking voice.

"Have you finished?"

"Oh, my father, forgive me! Mercy! I will never do so any more. I will beg my cousin, the adjutant, so hard; he will release Giannetto."

He was still speaking. Mateo raised his gun and took aim, the child made a desperate effort to rise, but it was too late; Mateo fired, and Fortunato fell stone dead.

Without casting a glance at the body, Mateo took his way back to the house to get a spade to dig his son's grave. He had gone but a few steps when he met Giuseppa, who was running toward him, alarmed at the noise of the shot.

"What have you done?" she shrieked.

"Justice!"

"Where is he?"

"In the ravine. I am going to bury him. He died like a Christian. I made him recite his prayers. Heaven rest his soul!"

G. H. LAWSON.

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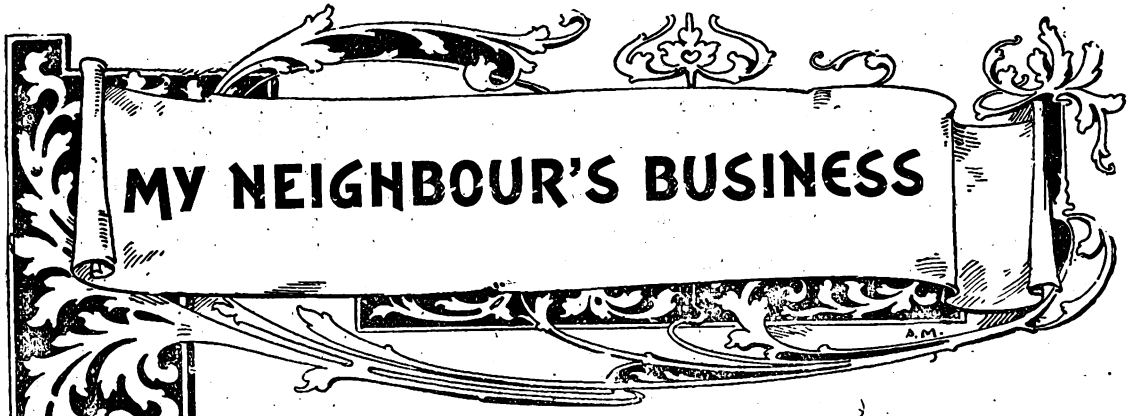
MY NEIGHBOUR'S BUSINESS



"It's a lady, Mr. Ernest, to see you."

I stopped in the occupation of buttoning up my overcoat, for I was just about to leave the office. It was one of those raw, foggy, sunless days which sometimes come in August—days which seem to accentuate the closing of summer by a sort of dismal contrast of sky and atmosphere.

"A lady!" I repeated, in some surprise, for I had not many lady clients. Our business, the business represented by our sign: "Ernest & Son," on the wall outside, was mostly with shipping merchants, and concerned contracts with the mercantile marine branch of trade. But the man who is actively engaged in business in London soon learns to be astonished at nothing, and I courteously drew forward a chair as a tall, slim lady, dressed in shabby, black silk, and a cashmere shawl long past its prime, came gliding into the room, holding out a card, upon which I read the words:

"Mrs. Burgoyne Beltringham."

"Happy to see you, madam," said I. "Of what service can I be to you?"

"In the old times," said Mrs. Burgoyne Beltringham, rather sentimentally, "your dear father, Mr. Ernest, was my stay and comfort, the head of the family, I may say. My maiden name was Ernest," she explained. "I am a cousin of your dear deceased father. To *him* I always came in any time of trouble or distress. His advice and counsel were valuable to me; but now——"

"I understand," I made haste to say. "Is it anything about ships?"

"No," said Mrs. Beltringham. "It's my daughter. I cannot compel her to do as I desire her to do."

"Oh!" said I. "Is she a little girl?"

"She's seventeen," said Mrs. Beltringham.

At this I drew back slightly.

"In that case," said I, "I really do not see how *I* can be of service."

"Oh, Mr. Ernest, pray do not abandon the case thus precipitately," said Mrs. Beltringham, wringing her neatly gloved hands. "Your dear father would have gone down to the Grange with me; he would have reasoned with Myra; he would have showed her plainly that it was her duty to be an obedient and docile child; he——"

"But I am a lawyer, madam, and not a clergyman. And, you see, I am not my father."

"If you would accompany me down to-night, Mr. Ernest," wheedled Mrs. Beltringham, "it would consume but little of your valuable time. The air of the Grange is most beneficial, and I, a poor heart-broken mother, would feel that my authority was backed up by legal dignity. For the sake of your dear, dead father, Mr. Ernest, I implore you to aid me."

All this may, perhaps, in print, partake of the character of hyperbole, but as she spoke it there was a genuine ring of helplessness and entreaty about it which worked on my sympathies, and almost before I knew it I had consented.

After all, was she not a sort of a cousin? Ought I to refuse a responsibility thus inherited from my own father? And did not all this partake of the nature of an adventure?

Glynn Grange was a weird old house, surrounded with shrubbery, on the top of a hill. A black-looking lake slept close by, within a circle of dark fir trees; an avenue of beech trees led down to a neglected gate. An old woman, with her head tied up, came to the door, and it was some time before the fire in what Mrs. Beltringham called "the west drawing-room," could be persuaded to do anything but sulk and smoke. Our dinner was a curious cong omeration of cold meats and rehashes; and my bed-room, at the end of a long, dark corridor, looked exactly as if it might be the favourite residing-place of a very gloomy ghost. I began to wish I had stayed at home.

Miss Beltringham, the culprit, did not appear at dinner. I had scarcely expected she would. Still it made the matter embarrassing.

"I could not make her come in," said the widow. "She is naturally displeased to hear of the errand on which you are come."

"Pleasant for me," thought I.

"But what have I to say to her when she does come in?" I asked feebly.

"I have every reason to fear," mysteriously murmured the old lady, "that she is encouraging a clandestine lover."

I whistled under my breath.

"Dear me!" said I. "I fear, in that case, she would hardly like me to interfere."

"Dear Mr. Ernest," said Mrs. Beltringham, "for your father's sake, do not desert me in this emergency. He is a fellow of low degree—a common gardener; and she is of the blood of the Ernests and Beltringhams. Do, *do* speak to her!"

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What answer could I make?

I had allowed myself to be dragged into this dilemma. I felt I must get out of it as best I could.

I cannot say that I slept particularly well that night. My room was certainly damp, and I could see wreaths of white mist floating over the black lake below as I peered through the blinds.

The ghost, however, was considerate enough not to trouble me, and when the morning sun shone over the terraced garden below, it really did not look so gloomy.

But as I sat there looking out, a tall, slight figure, with a white, fleecy-like shawl wrapped lightly round her shoulders, glided down the central avenue, with a furtive look back at the house. At the same moment I saw a rough-looking man in a coarse straw hat and clad in overalls, come up the walk as if to meet her. Instinctively I opened the low French window which gave on the lawn, and stepped out. The rough stranger disappeared at once, behind a row of fruit trees. I walked calmly down the path.

"Miss Beltringham, I presume," said I, lifting my hat.

"Mr. Ernest, I suppose," said she.

"May I ask," said I, gesturing with my finger, "who *that* man is?"

"Certainly," said she composedly. "It is the gardener from the village."

"And you came here to see him?"

"I came here to see him—certainly! Are there any other questions you would like to ask me, sir? My name is Myra Beltringham. I am seventeen and a half years old. I left boarding-school last year. I have had the measles and scarlet fever—"

"Miss Beltringham, I beg you to cease," I cried.

"Have I left out anything?" said she, looking me in the face with "divine audacity"; and then I perceived how exceedingly pretty and dimpled she was, with cheeks fresher than any roses, hair shot with gleams of gold, and blue, indignant eyes. "Now, Mr. Ernest, since you have really come all the way from London to investigate my affairs, I will be frank with you—"

"Miss Beltringham, I beg—"

"Be so kind as to hear me out, sir," said she, with the gesture of a princess. "I admit everything. I *do* come out here daily to see this man. It is because I am selling him the roses, pinks, carnations and heliotropes which I have myself planted and reared in the garden. He is in the employ of a florist in London. I met him privately because I did not wish poor, proud mamma to know that we are reduced to this. I decline to abandon the business because it helps to meet a good many of our unavoidable debts. So if you have any objections to urge—"

"But I have none," cried I. "Pray, Miss Beltringham, do not consider me such a meddler."

"I do not know what else you are!" said Myra, severely as a young Diana.

I was silent. She walked on to rejoin the man in the overalls, who was all this time waiting for her in the shadow of the pear-trees, and I turned back to the house, feeling extremely mortified.

After breakfast, however, as I was putting on my gloves to return to the train, she came up to me.

"Mr. Ernest," said she. "I am very sorry."

"So am I," I observed quietly.

"Mamma has been talking to me," pleaded she. "I know now that you acted only by her desire."

I inclined my head.

"That was all," said I.

"Mr. Ernest, will you forgive me for that ungracious, unjust, unreasonable burst of temper? Will you consider it all unsaid?"

"I will do anything that you ask me," said I, flinging my dignity aside in the sunshine of that winning smile, those heaven-blue eyes. Since the days of Helen of Troy, what man ever could resist a woman's beauty?

So we parted good friends. Need I add that I came down again the next week; that I kept coming; that Myra and I became lovers, engaged people—married, all in the due course of time? And that we have fitted up the Grange for a summer home, and that the florist goes elsewhere for his cut flowers now? Does it not all follow naturally enough?

B. H. T.

A QUESTION OF ANALYSIS.

THE STORY OF AN UP-TO-DATE DETECTIVE.

I HAD dropped in at the rooms, 223 Baker Street, to find my friend Garnett absent, and his things in the confusion that follows a hasty departure.

I threw his pyjamas and nightcap back into his bedroom and shut the door on the disorder within, took a peep into what had been my own bedroom, but which he now used for his chemical experiments, and then pushed the chairs into place and cleared a space in the middle of the sitting-room, preparatory to enjoying a quiet smoke.

From where I sat I could see through one of the windows down into the street, and just as I cut the end off my cigar, noting at the same time that it was the last I had with me, my glance fell upon a man running in a diagonal direction from round the next corner towards No. 223. A few seconds later there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs, and the landlady ushered this same man into the room.

He paused for a moment to regain his breath. I motioned him into the chair opposite.

"Are you—Mr. Robert Garnett?" he gasped, trembling from what might have been utter exhaustion or fright. At the same time he felt into a cheap cigar case in an upper waistcoat pocket, but his fingers came away empty.

"Mr. Garnett is out," I answered, "but will, I think, be in directly. I am Dr. John Wilson."

I offered him the cigar that I was just preparing to smoke. He seized it, struck a match, inhaled several deep whiffs, and uttered a sigh of relief.

"That's better. I am an inveterate smoker, and nothing but tobacco will brace my nerves. They

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need bracing now!" Then he went on puffing again.

I rose from my chair and walked over to the mantelpiece to get Garnett's pipe.

"I am in a terrible fix," he said, leaning towards me.

"What is the trouble?"

'Murder!"

"You have murdered someone?"

"No, but I am in instant danger of being accused of doing so. Oh! I wish Garnett were here. It's my fellow-lodger. Last night we were out late and finally had a quarrel. I wouldn't go home with him. This afternoon I went round to the rooms—we live in Axminster Court—and I found the place in charge of the police. My partner had been murdered in his bed!"

The fellow had smoked his cigar down till it burnt the band. He threw the stump down and then began to fidget.

"When is that detective coming?" he groaned.

I began to repeat my assurances, when he jumped up, seized his hat, and with an "I'll come back again," flung out of the room.

I sat still, watching his retreating figure through the window, and pulled at the pipe. Another minute and Garnett hove in sight, his tall figure and loping gait making it easy to recognise him in the crowd. A half minute later he was bounding up the stairs and into the room, but not before I had slipped the empty pipe back on the mantelpiece where I found it, and resumed my place at the window.

"Hallo! You, Wilson? I *am* glad to see you. Who was the other?"

"What other?"

"Your visitor."

"Now, really——"

"Oh, come! A man was sitting here talking to you within the last three minutes."

"Well," I said, undone by his assurance, "I admit it. But first tell me how you know, and then I will tell you about him. It is important, too."

"Very simple, and quite plain. The room smells of tobacco."

"I was smoking your pipe."

"But my pipe tobacco makes a grey smoke. That blue cloud up there is from a cigar. The smell, however, is of my tobacco, showing that both were smoking at once. There is the cigar, and the dash of ashes where it fell shows that it was not thrown from your chair, but from the other. Now about the visitor. Is it a case?"

"Yes. You met him just at the corner. Tall, slightly cross-eyed, a straw hat with a blue band."

"I noticed him. A collector, I should judge. By-the-way, I have a rather perplexing case on hand now. You will be interested. I slept late to-day, and was aroused about noon by a summons from Gregson. There has been a murder or something in a place called Axminster Court."

"My visitor came to see you about that."

"Ah, he must be the man who lodged with the corpse! So he came to engage me, did he? What particulars did he give you?"

"Well, really none, I think. He was very nervous, and I found that he is a nicotine fiend."

"Pshaw! Well, he will come back. I haven't had anything to eat to-day. You will join me in a bite?"

He rang the bell, and presently the landlady brought in a dinner that she had been trying to keep warm. I helped myself sparingly, and Garnett began to feed himself, talking between mouthfuls.

"This problem is likely very simple, but it baffles me more completely so far than anything I have had of late. The second floor of the Axminster Court house contains a long narrow passage which opens into the various rooms. This passage is reached from the ground by two staircases, one at the back and one at the front. At the head of one of these staircases is a room occupied by a cobbler, an old ex-soldier, with a wooden leg.

"Next to this room is another, which has been used as a lodging by a young man named Peter Nobb, a collector for a laundry company, and one, Charles Beauregard, a man of fifty years, and whose principal occupation, at least since coming to that neighbourhood, has been to keep drunk on a small income.

"This morning Beauregard was seen about the place in his usual unsteady condition until about ten o'clock, when he went into his room and bolted the door on the inside. An hour later Constable Hace broke into the room and found the man dead in bed with a round depression in his skull, where he had been struck by the round head of a shoemaker's hammer.

"The case, as I said, is very remarkable. There are plenty of data. These are of such a character as to admit of the most satisfactory analysis. But the result is anything but satisfactory. The conclusion I reach from a full review of the evidence is that the man cannot be, and therefore is not, dead. But this conclusion certainly does not agree with the facts, for they have the body at the mortuary.

"Here are the details in brief. Gregson came at noon and wanted me to have a look into the case. We went and found the place as I have said. Constable Hace's evidence was to the effect that he had looked through a crack in the door, and had seen the dead man on the bed. He had put his shoulder against the door and burst it open. Had made sure that the man was dead, and had hurried to keep out the crowd of tenants who were attracted by the breaking door. He had then reported to headquarters. Gregson had been detailed, and had called in Manfield. When they were baffled they came for me.

"I found the room just as it was when Hace first broke in, except that the body was gone. I made a preliminary examination of the surroundings. The only furniture was a double bed, two chairs, and a washstand. There was one window, and two doors. One of these opened into the passage; the other into the shoemaker's room. Now to try a little analysis.

"The man was dead. The cause of his death, apparently, was a blow from a hammer which lay on the floor, and which, I have since ascertained, fits the depression in the skull to a nicety. *How was this blow caused?* Analysis means to divide or split up. There is more than one basis of division; we will consider the possibilities of (1) human agency, (2) agency other than human.

"If human agency, we might divide into intent or accident; but this division will help us none. Let us say, rather, (*a*) was the hammer *held* by a human? or (*b*) was it thrown or projected through space? Then, still further, was it the victim himself who wielded the hammer, or was it some other human?

"Now let us consider an agency other than human. First, as wielding the hammer by actual contact; and second, by throwing or projecting it through space.

"Before carrying the analysis any further, I will speak of the examination of the surroundings I made, and then consider the questions this analysis brings out in the

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light of that examination. The window was fastened, and so covered by dust and spider webs as to show beyond question that nothing had passed through it for months. An examination of the passage door showed that, as the constable had thought, the door was bolted on the inside, and his rush against it had torn the staple from the woodwork.

"The door leading into the shoemaker's room was not bolted on either side, but was locked, and the key had not been seen for ever so long. Moreover, the shoemaker's bench was placed across this doorway, and he had been sitting there all that morning. The crack in the passage door, mentioned by Constable Hace, was too narrow to allow the hammer to pass through. The ceiling, walls, and floor of the room I inspected thoroughly, and am sure that there is not an opening of any kind bigger than a small rat hole.

"Now to review the questions. Was the blow struck by the victim himself, and if so, did he hold the hammer in his hand, or throw it? I am satisfied that the wound is in such a place and of such a character that this possibility may be dismissed. Next, was some other human the immediate cause of the blow from the hammer, and if so, was it held, or was it projected through space? Only by one route could the murderer have had ingress to the room to strike a direct blow or to throw the weapon; that is, by the door across which the shoemaker's bench stood. Under this head, however, there is still another possibility. Suppose that the hammer was already in the room, before the passage door was bolted? It could not have been wielded on the end of a pole, for the only opening, the crack in the door, would not allow of it. But it might have been tripped by a string from a height. There was a shelf high up above the bed and I was sure I had solved the mystery; but on examination it proved to be covered with a quantity of dust that showed no sign of having been disturbed.

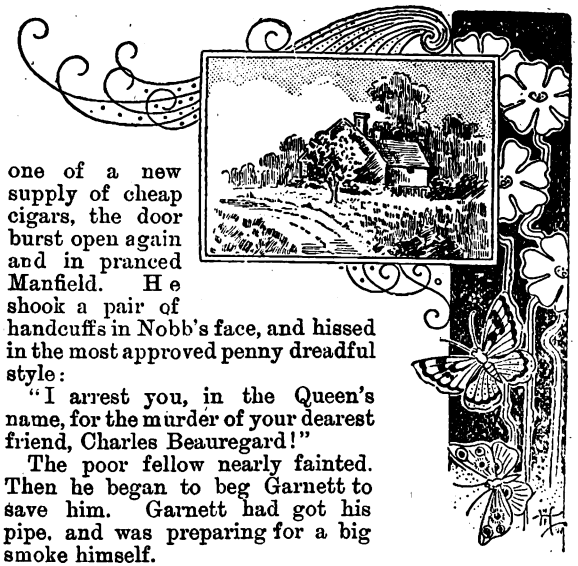
"As for an agency other than human, which either held or projected the hammer: It could not have been shot into the room, we have already decided. An ape could not have brought it in any more readily than a man. A rat might have tipped it off the shelf, but you can't get round the dust.

"Now we have viewed all the possibilities, and the only explanation we have is the suspicion aroused against the old shoemaker. After we had talked it all over, Gregson was so convinced of my reasoning that he arrested the cobbler at once. To make the case stronger, the hammer with which Beauregard was killed was found to be the mate of another in the shoemaker's kit, and he acknowledged that it was his.

"But now I have a host of little witnesses, whose evidence proves the old man's innocence. It seems that he makes friends with all the children in the Court, and they play in his shop. Just after breakfast, they say, they slyly tied his wooden leg to his bench, and some of them hung about all the morning to enjoy the joke when he should try to get up. Gregson admits that he found him thus tied when he arrested him.

"To corroborate *this* evidence, I have taken out the lock of that door and found that the dusty tumblers of the lock had not been thrown for weeks, at least. Thus you see, the conclusion drawn from the most rigid deductions is that the man could not be, and is not, killed. Is it any wonder I am puzzled?"

Just at this point the landlady ushered in my visitor, Peter Nobb, who lodged with the murdered man. And almost before he had taken the proffered seat, puffing at



one of a new supply of cheap cigars, the door burst open again and in pranced Manfield. He shook a pair of handcuffs in Nobb's face, and hissed in the most approved penny dreadful style:

"I arrest you, in the Queen's name, for the murder of your dearest friend, Charles Beauregard!"

The poor fellow nearly fainted. Then he began to beg Garnett to save him. Garnett had got his pipe, and was preparing for a big smoke himself.

"Caught the right man, Manfield? What is your evidence?"

"They had a very violent quarrel last night."

"Pooh!"

"Well, that isn't evidence, but it's strong probability."

"Pish!"

"Well, if you know so much, name the man you suspect. Gregson says you're stumped."

Garnett was pulling furiously at his pipe. Suddenly he struck his forehead. "I have it!" he shouted. Then he looked oddly at Manfield. "I think (puff) when the truth (puff) comes out, you and Greg (puff) son will be (puff, puff) the two worst sold men in the service. I'm going to (puff) make an arrest myself," and he jumped up and put on his hat.

As he opened the door in walked Gregson. He looked disgusted and annoyed.

"Hallo," said my friend. "How's your man?"

"I let him go," answered Gregson shortly. He looked at Manfield and the bracelets on Nobb's wrists. "Better let *him* go, too." He handed a sheet of paper to Garnett, who had stepped back into the room. It was a note addressed to the superintendent.

"Last winter," Garnett read, "a man who is now known to the public as Charles Beauregard killed my brother. The circumstances were such as to make his conviction before a court impossible. I decided to take the law into my own hands. The murderer had taken a name then unknown to me and lost himself in the East End. In order to facilitate my search, and to support myself while it lasted, as well as to ensure my escape from suspicion, I secured a position on the police force." Garnett stopped to chuckle. "This morning when I had found the murderer I boldly broke in his door, executed him with one blow of a hammer, and then reported the mysterious murder to headquarters, as you would have expected from their humble servant,

JOHN HACE, Constable."

"The analysis was all right," said Garnett, as he unlocked the handcuffs from Nobb's wrists, "but I didn't carry it back far enough at first. Didn't I say that you official detectives would be sold, when the truth came out?"

JOHN JONES.

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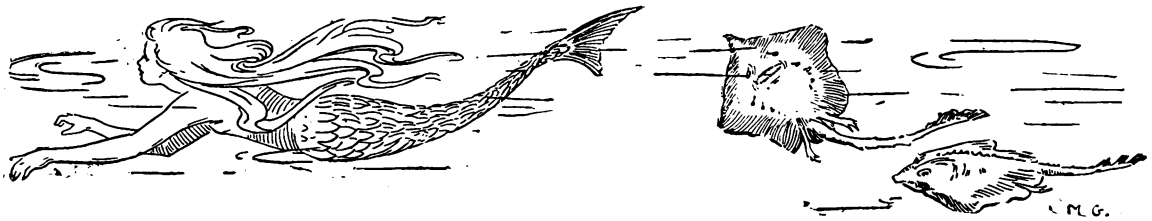

WHEN A WOMAN WILL, SHE WILL—PERHAPS.

"Look," she said, leaning forward and touching his hand lightly, "there's the man you pointed out to me the other day."

He glanced in the direction she was looking.

"Oh, yes! Smith the widower. You seem to be quite interested in him."

"Widowers have as much charm for women as widows for men," she replied. "Besides, being twice a widower makes him doubly interesting. He's handsome, don't you think so?"

"H'm! I shouldn't pick him out for his beauty. As a rule, women have different ideas from what I have on the subject of masculine beauty. However, I once had a woman tell me I was handsome."

"You are modest," she answered. "It wouldn't do for me to tell you that you are good-looking. It would seem as if you had been fishing. But let's talk of Mr. Smith. Tell me all you know about him."

"Well, I won't attempt to describe his appearance, because your imagination is so much better than mine. As for his social standing, it's all that can be desired. Moreover, he's very wealthy, and is considered an excellent catch, if that's what you want to know."

"How could you guess it! Really, you're becoming brilliant. Now, if you'll believe me, that is exactly what I do want to know. I have decided to marry him."

"By Jove! That is sudden. But how are you going to manage it, since this isn't leap year?"

"Never you mind. I think it's Thackeray who says that a woman can marry any man she wants, and I intend to marry Mr. Smith."

"How do you know he hasn't some one else in mind? I won't offer the other alternative, namely, that he should have decided that there should be no third Mrs. Smith, because I know he could not remain invulnerable to your charms."

"Very prettily put, I am sure. If I hadn't made up my mind to become Mrs. Smith I should marry you."

"Thanks, awfully! Don't you think he may be somewhat smitten with the lady he has with him? He is very attentive to her."

"Don't call her a lady. She couldn't be one if she tried. No woman who wore such a costume could be a lady. Now, let me see," she continued. "I must be forming my plan of action. You're acquainted with him, are you not?"

"Slightly. Why?"

"I want you to introduce him to me. I tell you what to do—call the waiter and send over your card. Then he'll come and you can do the introducing. I'll manage the rest."

"The first move is good," he answered, as he complied with her instructions.

"Of course it is. It is merely a sample of what the rest will be, however. Your waiter is everlastingly slow. There, he's handed him your card. He's looking for you now. What a charming smile, and what beautiful teeth. Why doesn't he come? I shouldn't think he'd have to consult the frump he's got with him. If she sees my hat I know she'll try to keep him from coming. But perhaps she doesn't appreciate Virot. She doesn't seem to have patronized him."

"I shouldn't wonder if she were near-sighted," he replied; "she seems to be scrutinising her companion quite closely."

"Don't try to think up mean things to say. There, he's coming! How splendidly he carries himself! What's the meaning of that sigh? Don't you feel well?"

"I am suffering from ennui. I should prefer to have you rave over me for a change. Suppose you try praising me to him; you've done the reverse quite long enough, it seems to me."

"You're not jealous, I hope? I believe you've forgotten the definition of platonic———"

"Ah, Mr. Smith," he interrupted. "I took the liberty of asking you to come over in order that I might find out the result of that little venture of ours. I should have come over to your table, but I wanted you to meet my friend," and he mumbled an introduction.

"I am delighted to meet you," said Mr. Smith. "You must be very much in the confidence of your friend, for I never heard him mention our speculation before any one else."

"That is very magnanimous of him, I'm sure," she replied, "for we weren't agreeing particularly well before you came. You are the peacemaker, you see."

"She is right," he joined in; "I think for the sake of peace you had better stay, Mr. Smith. Won't you invite your companion over? There is plenty of room at this table for four."

"Certainly. That will be very pleasant; I'll go and get her," and he returned to his companion.

"What makes you do that? That's just like you to start out well and end up with something terrific. She's coming as sure as fate. How nonsensical she looks with that crazy feather hanging over her ear. But I suppose I must look pleasant," and she smiled as the two approached.

"I knew she would be delighted to come," said Mr. Smith. "Allow me to present my wife. By the way," he continued, turning to his friend, "I heard you were engaged to a Miss De Roy."

"Oh, no, that's off long ago, isn't it, Miss De Roy?" he added in an undertone.

"Yes," she replied, in a dazed way.

A. B. G.

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The Unknown Wife.

At the close of 1811, in the estate of Nenaradovo, lived Gavrilo Gavrilovitch, a Russian proprietor. His unbounded hospitality and frankness won him many friends among the neighbouring proprietors. While many would visit him to partake of his hospitality or to play a game of cards with his wife, Paraskovia Pietrovna, an amiable and prepossessing lady of forty, the thoughts and aspirations of the majority were centred upon his seventeen-year-old daughter Masha.

But, like many other girls of her age and station in the Russian provinces, Masha had been brought up on the French novel, and was passionately in love with a poor army officer who lived a few versts away from her father's estate, and who reciprocated her love.

But Masha's parents positively objected to the match, and the young man's welcome became cooler every day. This, however, did not hinder the lovers from corresponding or from meeting quite frequently in the forest. Amid romantic surroundings, with no human being to detect or overhear them, they would pledge to each other eternal love, would bewail their fate and devise all sorts of schemes.

Elopement was, of course, proposed in due season by the young man, and as Masha was an ardent admirer of all sorts of adventures pertaining to heroism, it more than pleased her romantic imagination.

The cold winter put an end to their secret interviews. The more voluminous, however, became their correspondence. Vladimir would entreat his beloved in every letter to intrust her destiny to him, to elope, to keep out of sight until the excitement should be over, then to appear before her parents, who would undoubtedly become resigned to the inevitable, to kneel down before them and beg their forgiveness and blessing.

And this, according to his calculation, would surely end in: "Come, children, to our embrace and be happy."

All this seemed very fascinating to Masha, and without much meditation she consented to follow the course suggested by her lover. And the course was this:

On the day of her departure she was to decline taking her meals with her parents at the table, pretending to suffer with a severe headache. Thus she would be enabled to make the necessary preparations for the journey in her room. Her servant, who was in the secret, was to accompany her to the garden gate, where a troika, or span of three horses, sent by Vladimir would be in waiting. They were then to drive as fast as the horses could carry them to the church in the village of Dshadrino, where Vladimir would be sure to meet them.

Now if any one spent a most miserable and sleepless night in Gavrilovitch's house it was his daughter Masha. After packing her things she wrote two very long letters—one to her intimate friend, a young girl of her own age, and the other to her parents.

She took leave of them in the most touching and pathetic words, ascribing her rash action to a providential will, expressing her hope that her step toward perfect happiness might not incur their anger, and concluding that the happiest moment in her life will be that when their paternal blessing will be bestowed on their daughter and her most noble husband.

It was nearly midnight when Masha and her maid left the house. Tereshka, Vladimir's driver, was already awaiting them at the garden gate. He helped them into the sleigh, and after arranging the bundles and packages and seeing that his master's "jewel" was comfortably seated, took up the reins, and in five minutes they were beyond the limits of Gavrilo Gavrilovitch's estate.

While Tereshka is taking care of Masha we shall turn our attention to our gallant officer. Vladimir had his hands full all day. In the morning he visited the Dshadrino minister, who, after considerable difficulty, and upon receiving a handsome deposit, consented to marry him.

Then he set out in search of the necessary three witnesses. The first one he met—a retired colonel, Dravin—consented to accommodate him. This adventure, he assured him, recalled to him his past associations and his own adventures. He insisted upon Vladimir's staying for dinner, assuring him that there would be no difficulty in finding two more witnesses.

And so it happened that no sooner was dinner over than two local proprietors were announced. Both were in favour of the marriage as well as of the means of effecting it, and of course were ready at a moment's notice to offer their services, and, should circumstances require it, to sacrifice their lives for the noble cause. Vladimir was overjoyed. He embraced his friends, and after bidding them an affectionate good-bye hurried off to make the necessary preparations.

The day drew to its close. Night set in. A strong northern wind filled the air with burning cold.

"A storm!" Vladimir thought to himself as he sat in the sleigh driving as rapidly as his horse could carry him to Dshadrino, where he intended to arrive before Masha.

The road to Dshadrino was familiar to him, and he expected to traverse the short distance in an hour at most. The reverse of his expectations, however, was the result. The wind grew stronger and stronger, culminating soon in a raging and blinding snowstorm. The road was swept out of sight, the familiar surroundings vanished.

Vladimir's efforts to keep the right track were fruitless. The horse went on at haphazard, now ascending a snowdrift, and now falling and upsetting the sleigh in a ravine. An hour, two hours passed, but not the slightest sign of Dshadrino.

At last it occurred to him that he was travelling the wrong way. He stopped, reflected a moment and turned to the right. He consulted his watch. It was half-past two in the morning. Oh, horror! But toward Dshadrino he went, in spite of the boundless snowfield and the innumerable snowdrifts and ravines that lay before him. Now and then his sleigh would upset, throwing him into the snow. But his own bodily comfort was the least to be thought of.

At last a welcome object presented itself to his sight. It was a small forest. "Thank Heaven," he thought to himself, "Dshadrino must be near." Thus encouraged, he drove onward. He lashed the horse. The poor animal made an effort to move. He lashed it again and again, but it could not trot. Gradually, however, he passed the forest.

The plain, snowy field, stretching in the distance as

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far as his eye could reach, presented itself once more to his sight. Although the storm subsided and the bright moon hung once again over his cheerless and monotonous surroundings, it was bitterly cold.

As he drove along, contemplating all sorts of means to extricate himself from his perilous position, he beheld a village, consisting of four or five little huts. He directed his horse toward it, and as he reached the first hut began to rattle at the window with all the might of a man for whom there is nothing left but despair. A few moments later the window was raised, and a long, grey beard, apparently belonging to the master of the house, became visible.

"What is it you want?"

"Can you tell me how far it is to Dshadrino?"

"Dshadrino! Dshadrino! Let me see. I reckon it will be about ten versts."

A thunderbolt or an electrical shock could not have had more effect upon Vladimir than these words. He remained upon the spot motionless, like a man doomed to death.

"And where do you come from?" resumed the old man

Vladimir had no patience to answer his question.

"Can I hire your horse to take me there?" he uttered at last.

"Hire my horse? Why, man, wait till I buy one!"

"Then give me a guide. I will pay him all he wants for his services."

"This I'll do. Just wait a second. I'll send my son, and he will take you there," said the old man, disappearing in the darkness.

The young fellow, armed with a dubina, soon appeared, and without losing any time they started on their way to Dshadrino. Morning dawned when they reached their destination. The church was locked. After paying his guide he directed his steps toward the minister's house. Alas, his team was not to be seen there! How sad the news that awaited him!

But let us return to Nenaradovo and see what is going on in Gavrilo Gavrilovich's house.

Nothing in particular.

As usual, the old folks rose early in the morning; Gavrilo Gavrilovitch appearing in his ancient "kolpak" and felt jacket, and Paraskovi Paetrovna in her warm morning gown. The samovar was brought in, the table was set, and as Masha failed to appear in the gostinnui, or dining-room, a servant maid was dispatched to her apartment to inquire how she slept during the night and how she felt in general.

The maid soon returned, announcing that the baruishnia (miss) had had a restless night, but that she felt much better now and would soon join then at the table. The maid had no sooner made her report than Masha appeared, approaching her papenka and mamenka with an affectionate good morning.

"How is your health, dear?" inquired Gavrilo Gavrilovitch.

"I feel much better, papa," replied Masha.

"You must have caught cold, Masha," interposed Paraskovia Petrovna.

"That may be, mamenka."

The day passed quietly, but towards evening Masha fell ill. A doctor was immediately sent for, and when he arrived, two hours later, he found the patient in a state of delirium. It soon developed into a high fever, and for two weeks the poor girl hovered between life and death.

No one in the house had the slightest idea about the intended elopement. The letter which she addressed to her parents the night previous she destroyed as soon as she returned home, and the maid, fearing to incur the anger and punishment of her master, kept the secret to herself.

The minister and the witnesses were alike reticent about the matter (they had good cause for it). And as to Tereshka, Vladimir's driver, he knew well how to keep a secret, even when drunk, the more so when sober. Thus the secret was kept sacred by over half a dozen conspirators.

But Masha herself in her delirium began to unravel the mystery. Yet her mother, who never left her daughter's room, paid no attention to her words. She merely ascribed them to the fact of Masha being in love with Vladimir, thinking that in all probability her unsuccessful love was the chief cause of her sickness. Something had to be done, and one fine morning she consulted her husband and some of their neighbours as to the advisability of gratifying Masha's wish.

All came to the conclusion that such was Masha's lot; that the inevitable must happen; that poverty is no crime; that it is not riches that make the man, but *vice versâ*, and so forth.

When our conscience is pricked, and we find no justification for our despotic deeds, we generally cling to highly moral texts, which upon other occasions may not convey the slightest meaning to us.

In the meantime Masha became convalescent. Vladimir was no longer to be seen in Gavrilo Gavrilovitch's house. The rude reception offered him during his last visit kept him aloof from their house. Once more council was held, and it was decided to write and ask him to pay a visit.

But their surprise may be imagined when, in answer to their invitation, he wrote a very indignant letter, declaring his determination never to cross their threshold, asking them to forget him, the unhappiest of mortals, and concluding that death was his only hope and consolation. A few days later they heard that Vladimir had entered the army. This occurred in 1812.

Weeks and months passed by, and none dared to speak of Vladimir in Masha's presence. She, in her turn, never mentioned his name. At the end of four months, while glancing over a daily paper, she happened to see his name mentioned among those mortally wounded in the battle of Borodino. She became almost prostrate with grief, and grave fears were once more entertained as to the possible consequences.

Nothing serious, however, was the result. Five weeks later Gavrilo Gavrilovitch died. Poor Paraskovia Petrovna was almost overcome with grief, and Masha's attention was now wholly devoted to her mother. Nenaradovo, with its sorrowful recollections, was no longer attractive to them, and they decided to leave it and make their home in the city of N——.

In the meantime the Franco-Russian war drew to its close.

Although still surrounded by a host of admirers, Masha was as cool and indifferent to them as at the time when she first came to the city. She changed, however, her opinion, when, one fine afternoon, a wounded colonel, Brunin, with a medal and a Georgian cross in his buttonhole, and a very handsome and attractive face, which seemed the more interesting because of its paleness, was introduced to her. He was quite young—in the neighbourhood of thirty-two or thirty-three.

As to Brunin, he was certainly a fine young fellow. He possessed that humour and self-respect which seldom

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fails to please women. His relations to Masha were unrestrained and natural.

He appeared to be quite settled and reserved, although rumour had it that once upon a time he was the greatest mischief-maker living. This, however, did not lower him in Masha's estimation. On the contrary, she regarded his past tricks as something quite natural to youth and activity. What had interested her most, more than his tenderness, more than his pleasant conversation, more than his bandaged arm, was his silence, often accompanied by heavy sighs.

Indeed her curiosity and imagination upon such occasions were almost beyond her control. She could not help acknowledging that he took more than an ordinary interest in her, while on the other hand, he, too must have observed that of all her admirers he was the only one who received her attention.

What, then, had kept him from falling at her feet and declaring his love? What was the cause? Was it that timidity which goes hand in hand with true love, or the mere policy of a cunning dangler? She reflected upon the matter and came to the conclusion that timidity could be the only cause. Her impatience grew stronger and stronger. Suspense, of whatever nature it might be, and especially when love is at stake, is always burdensome to women.

One evening Brunin appeared in her room—his face paler than usual and his beautiful eyes expressing that tenderness which is both bewitching and powerful. She thought the long wished for moment had come at last. But the "declaration" was not made.

Her neighbours and friends in the meantime discussed her wedding as a matter of fact, while her mother was simply delighted with her prospective son-in-law. Thus time passed on.

One morning, while Paraskovia Petrovna was busily engaged in looking over an old almanac, Brunin entered her room.

"Can Masha be seen?" he asked.

"You will see her in the garden," replied the old woman. "I will expect you to have dinner with us."

As Brunin went out Paraskovia Petrovna crossed herself, supplicating that the proposal of marriage might take place.

Brunin found Masha by the pond under a willow, all dressed in white, and with a book in her hands.

"A real heroine of a novel," he thought to himself.

After the first few words Masha cut the conversation short, thus affecting that mutual embarrassment from which there was but one way of ridding themselves, and that was for Brunin to open his heart. And so he did.

"But I have acted carelessly, most carelessly, by seeing and hearing you every day. I had no right to seek your acquaintance and friendship. Oh, wretched man that I am! It is too late—too late now! Your memory will always haunt me, your charming image will give me no peace. Oh, that I could be spared this torture! Try to forget and forgive me, dear Masha. I am unworthy of you. That obstacle——"

"That obstacle always existed," said Masha, in a suppressed voice. "I could never be your wife——"

"I know," he replied quietly. "I know that you have once loved. But he is dead, and time effaces the sweetest of memories. The thought that I might have been happy with you if——"

"Not another word, for Heaven's sake—not another word! You torment me."

"Yes, I know. I feel that I might have been happy; that you might have been mine; but, oh, miserable man that I am, I am married!"

Masha looked at him aghast for a moment, hardly realising her whereabouts.

"Yes; I am a married man," resumed Brunin more firmly, "but I have not the slightest idea who my wife is, where she is, whether I will ever see her again."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Masha, scarcely able to control her excitement. "Is it possible? Tell me all about it! I will—later——"

"In the beginning of 1812," said Brunin, "I was on my way to Vilno, where our regiment was then stationed. It was a cold night, a storm was raging, we lost our way and our driver was in despair. But as I was in great haste to reach Vilno I ordered him to proceed regardless of the weather. We crossed hills and valleys and rivers, and after being frozen almost to death, entered a village.

"As we drove along the street I suddenly beheld a light. A few minutes later we found ourselves in front of a church. It was dimly illuminated. Some people were inside.

"'This way. This way!' I heard several voices shouting.

"I ordered the driver to stop the horses.

"'What have you been doing all this while?' remarked someone. 'Why, your girl is in despair. The minister was at a loss to know what to do, and we were just ready to drive home.'

"Without considering the situation, I entered the church and was soon directed to a dark corner where, upon a bench, lay the bride, while a girl, evidently her maid, busied herself about her.

"'Thank Heaven you are here at last!' cried the girl to me. 'Why, the baruishnia (miss) is overcome with grief.'

"I had no sooner directed my attention from the bride when the half blind old minister approached, asking me if I were ready for the altar.

"'Certainly, certainly,' said I, hardly knowing what I was about. The bride was helped to the altar. She impressed me as a good-looking girl. Oh, wretched man that I am!

"I took the place beside her at the altar. The minister was impatient, the three witnesses and the maid supported the bride, and it seemed that their entire attention was given to her. We were married.

"'Kiss each other,' commanded the minister after the ceremony was over. My wife removed the veil from her face, and as I was ready to kiss her she drew back, shrieking:

"'Away, away, it is not he!'

"All turned their frightened eyes on me. I retreated quietly, threw myself into the sleigh and was soon out of the village, leaving a scene of horror behind me."

"Heavens," exclaimed Masha, "and you have no idea what has become of your poor wife?"

"Not the slightest, nor do I know the name of that village or where it is situated. I thought so little at the time of such tricks that it soon escaped my memory. My driver, who was with me at the time, has long since died in war, and here I am, with not the slightest prospects of ever finding the woman on whom I played such a cruel joke."

"And do you no longer recognise the girl whom you married on that stormy night?" cried Masha, clasping her hands.

Brunin looked, grew pale, and fell at her feet.

A. G. CARLTON.

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From Prairie and Backwoods.

VIII.—THE SQUAW OF BLACK WOLF.

EVERY evening, when they were not away hunting or on the warpath, Black Wolf and his friend Ochilla used to come and sit on the big red rock by the river, to smoke, and talk, and watch the shadows of the tall hills on the other side deepen and grow longer as the sun sank.

The Wolf loved this spot because here he could come and dream and think whenever he liked, with nothing but the birds and squirrels to disturb him, and they went to sleep early. For Ochilla was a silent man, and never spoke unless he had something to say. There was no charm for him in the woods and hills and river. He enjoyed most the silence and his friend's company. Sometimes the Wolf would try to tell him what he saw in Nature, what the leaves whispered to him. Then Ochilla would take his pipe out of his mouth and grunt, and call the Wolf an old woman and a dreamer, and ask him how he thought he would look carrying wood and dressing skins. And then they would both laugh a little, and become silent again.

Sometimes the Wolf would retort, and tell Ochilla that he was a mole, because he could not see and hear all that the Wolf enjoyed, and that it spoilt a man to be married.

This would make Ochilla quite sober, because he had two squaws and the Wolf had none, though the two men were of the same age. For, although the Wolf was one of the bravest warriors in the nation, and had killed many men; though he hung five days in the sun-dance, never flinching; though he had made more single-handed raids, and run off with more horses than any other man in the tribe, and was a successful hunter—his friends had begun to make sport of him, and the women looked at him askance, for among the Sioux it is a disgrace for a man to be unmarried, especially if it be from his own choice. Black Wolf had plenty of horses, and weapons, and saddles, and robes, and could have married many girls if he would, for he was tall and strong, and handsome, but he would not, and Ochilla sometimes became very cross with him.

One evening in the hot weather Ochilla went down to the rock, but Black Wolf did not come. He did not come the next night, nor the next, and the fourth night, Ochilla did not go there because he knew that the Wolf would not come for many nights. His heart was glad, because he knew why his friend did not sit on the rock any more. He knew that every evening the Wolf with two or three other young men, sat in the lodge of old Si-chi-ton-ka, whose daughter, Ano-et-ka, was the prettiest girl in the tribe. And a few days later, Ochilla's youngest squaw told him that Si-chi-ton-ka's family had a talk, and could not decide between the Wolf and his rival Sa-han-te, and that both men would lie outside Si-chi-ton-ka's lodge and take their chances.

Ochilla's heart sank. Sa-han-te had one wife already, but he was said to be good to her, and the Wolf, being untried, he feared him. Besides, Sa-han-te was as handsome as the Wolf, almost as rich, and had a silver tongue. Into a girl's ear he could whisper sweet things of which Black Wolf knew nothing, and cared less. It would be a hard struggle, and Ochilla knew it. So when Black Wolf came past his lodge a few evenings later, and motioned to him to come to the rock, he was not surprised, only sorry.

They sat on the rock a long time before either spoke a word. Then Ochilla: "Well?"

"Son of Long Arrow, it is not well. He of the silver tongue wins. I am no lovemaker. I have given up, and will go away to the Blackfeet. This is no place for me."

Ochilla looked at him sternly.

"Soft-head Coyote! The girl is playing with you. She sits with Sa-han-te, but not under his blanket. She is making you play the fool. Go back, and be a man."

Black Wolf sat a few minutes longer in silence, then rose and went back to the camp. Ochilla looked after him and smiled.

The Wolf walked straight through the camp, to the willows by the creek. He might be too late for this evening. If so, he could talk to old Si-chi-ton-ka and trade horses or saddles an excuse for coming.

From the clump of willows on the left, a tall figure rose suddenly. It was Sa-han-te, and the rivals stood with folded arms, glaring at each other in silence.

Presently a form emerged from the lodge, and Ano-et-ka ran up the path.

Sa-han-te stepped forward with a contemptuous glance at his rival, and seized the girl in his arms.

Did the heavens fall? Did the Wolf dream? For Ano-et-ka struggled in Sa-han-te's arms, and called to him. With one bound he was at her side. Sa-han-te, with an oath, stalked away.

Ochilla, coming down to the creek to soak some arrows, met Sa-han-te going back to the camp, and later saw two persons sitting under one blanket, down by the willows, and he almost leapt for joy.

* * * * *

When people are first married all goes well. Both the newly wedded ones are anxious to please, and so they are happy. After a time, when, it is an old story—this being married—it is different.

Black Wolf never went to the rock again, and even stayed at home from the hut, so he could lie in the lodge, and smoke, and watch Ano-et-ka's nimble fingers as they deftly flew back and forth over her beadwork. He liked to help her sometimes, too, when he thought nobody saw him. But they did see him, and soon it came to be told that Black Wolf was becoming an old woman, and worked like a squaw. And they made fun of him—behind his back at first, then openly to his face; at least, the squaws did. There was something in the Wolf's eagle eye and close mouth which prevented any of the men but the chiefs and old warriors and his friend Ochilla from deriding him.

But Black Wolf did not seem to mind. He stayed in his lodge as much as he could, and only went to the big fall hunt because he feared to incur the sneers of his fellow-warriors.

Among the Sioux, he who gives way to this soft kind of love is said to be weak in the head. So, after a while, the old men and chiefs talked about putting the Wolf out of the Council in which he had been the most prominent of the younger men.

Ano-et-ka heard of this, and was ashamed. She was

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not afraid of the Wolf, for he had been too good to her, and she was spoilt. When, therefore, the Wolf lay watching her next day, she looked up and scowled, and called him a puppy, and an old woman, and a toad, and asked him if he thought he would ever be a man. Then Black Wolf, grieved, rose, and walked sadly down to the rock, where he stayed till the owls and bats came around. His heart was very sore, for he was sure now that his wife did not love him.

Ochilla, about dusk, went over to Black Wolf's lodge, and, being curtly informed by Ano-et-ka that she knew nothing of her lord's whereabouts, he hurried down to the river and found his friend.

Black Wolf opened his heart to the other and told him all his troubles, Ochilla asking questions and giving advice as though to a son. He had doubts as to the fair Ano-et-ka's fealty to her husband—he had heard her, at several dances loudly praise Sa-han-te, but this was nothing, for every Sioux woman may praise whom she will in the dance. There were other things, also, which gave him suspicion, but he deemed it unwise to tell his friend of them at present. He hoped the Wolf would now become more like other men, and subjugate Ano-et-ka as he, Ochilla, had subjugated two wives. So, when Black Wolf, almost weeping, had finished speaking, he only said quietly. "Why has not my brother given the woman the whip?"

Black Wolf's blood seemed to rush to his heart.

"What! Strike Ano-et-ka? Whip her—my wife?" he exclaimed.

"Why not? Women are strange creatures, and must be ruled. That is my way, and look at my women."

The Wolf did not answer.

He knew Ochilla's wives—thin, tired, bent creatures, worn with work.

He turned away and went back to the camp.

Thenceforth the Wolf was more like his old self, except that he hunted and raced horses as much as other men, and spent little time in dreaming. To Ano-et-ka he was kind but nothing more. He paid no more attention to her than to the slave women who did their cooking.

Their child, a boy, was born, but he merely smiled when it was shown him, and said no word to her. He had begun to have the same uneasy feeling that other men do when their wives are made love to. For among the Sioux, a man may make love to married women, and to him her lawful husband can mete no punishment, even if he choose to kill the woman.

Sa-han-te, Ano-et-ka's former lover, now owner of two wives, did not attempt to conceal his efforts to induce Ano-et-ka to become his third. Indeed, it was, when the next fall hunt came round, common talk in the village.

The day before the hunters were to start, Sa-han-te somehow dropped his knife and hurt his foot badly. It was a curious wound, which looked as if it had been purposely made, but, as Sa-han-te said it was done by accident, there was nothing for others to say, though all knew he would now be obliged to remain at home with the women and old men. Though Black Wolf had been grieving over that warrior's attention to his wife, he still had faith in her, and believed her trustworthy.

And so the brave band went after the buffalo, and did not return for many days, for they met the Pawnees and had several battles in the hills, where, their foes outnumbering them, hemmed the Sioux in and kept them away from the buffalo herds. Then, one bright morning they rode proudly into camp, whither a courier had preceded them.

All the people came out to receive the hunters, and the old medicine man came up to Black Wolf and took his hand, for the courier had told him of the Wolf's prowess, and he was glad, for the young man had taken more scalps than any of his companions, at much greater risk.

Black Wolf looked round, hoping, in the throng of women, to see the glad face of his wife, but she was not there. The people near him seemed to fear to speak to him. His heart standing still, he turned and rode down to his lodge. All was silent. He dismounted and looked about him. No one had followed him, and he lifted the flap of the tepee and looked in. All was disorder and desolation. He understood. His own sister had left her husband's lodge in the same way, while he was absent.

Someone came up behind him. Black Wolf turned and saw it was his old father. They embraced, and the old man, weeping, told his son the story.

Ano-et-ka, he said, had gone to live with Sa-han-te the very day after her husband left. She took the child also. The old men had held council and decided that Sa-han-te must leave the village to await the decision of the absent head chief. So he had taken his women and children, and horses, and pitched his lodge up the creek, past the herd ground, where he now was.

"And," said old Ta-ha-chin, "if you do not cause the chief to make this robber pay dearly, you are not my son."

Black Wolf did not answer, but leaped on his horse and dashed up the creek. He passed a woman, toiling under a heavy load of wood; it was Sa-han-te's oldest wife, and she seeing who the rider was, fell by the rail and began to wail piteously. Sa-han-te, whose hair Ano-et-ka was dressing, before the lodge, leapt to his feet and grasped his bow, but let it fall when Black Wolf raised his hand in token of friendship.

The deserted husband sprang from his horse and looked at Sa-han-te searchingly. The other returned the gaze without flinching.

"Call the woman," said Black Wolf. Ano-et-ka, who had fled into the lodge, and was cowering under a pile of skins, came out, trembling, her baby in her arms.

The Wolf reached out and took the little one, and stroking its head asked Sa-han-te: "Do you love her—the woman?"

The other nodded.

"Do you love him?"

The woman, weeping, answered: "Yes."

"Will you be good to her and the child if I leave them to you, Silver Tongue?"

Sa-han-te's voice was clear as he answered simply: "I will."

Down the village, the assembled men and women were amazed when Black Wolf, with Sa-han-te and the faithless Ano-et-ka, rode in, but the Wolf did not notice their surprise. He saw nothing. Before the head chief's lodge he halted, and, before all the tribe, joined the hands of the guilty ones. Then turned and rode toward the river.

* * * * *

Ochilla, a little later, heard the voice of a warrior chanting his death-song, over in the direction of the big rock. He ran down there with the speed of the wind, but he was too late, and from the great whirlpool nothing ever comes up.

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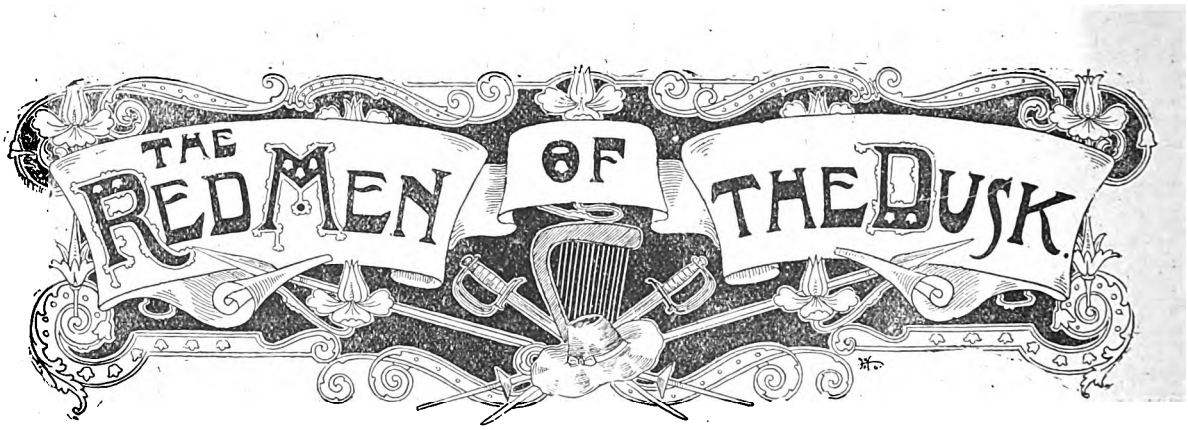


A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XX.

Close Quarters.

I was just swinging myself back into the room when there was a rustling of petticoats, and in ran Siani.

"Many, many coming," she called in a loud whisper. "Go! go!"

I shook my head, and she darted to the window.

A low cry burst from her lips as she saw the watchers without. A great clatter of feet on the stairs and a hubbub of angry voices warned me of the danger which threatened from within, and I cast a glance about me. To make a stand where I was would be impossible. The passage was the only place to hold them. In a few words I explained to Siani—who understood English much better than she spoke it—what I intended to do, and she nodded.

"I keep here," she said; "no one come this way."

She had provided herself with a formidable knife, and now spat into her fist, took a firm grip of the haft, and posted herself at the window. I patted her shoulder, drew my sword, and ran for the passage. I shut the door of the room swiftly, and listened. A loud cry of surprise rang along the gallery. The attacking party had found my room empty. Then I heard an excited voice screaming up the stairs, and I knew they would be on the right scent without delay.

Luckily for me, the passage was not straight. It took a sharp turn half-way between the chamber-door and the mouth where it opened to the gallery. It was unlighted, and the closing of the door threw this end into complete darkness, while my enemies would be outlined against the light without. It was narrow, and, as I love the point better than the edge, I was the better suited.

"Come," thought I, "'tis a case of drawing a badger. The hole is snug and convenient to a degree, and if I do not give them as good as they bring, 'twill be foul shame to me." I had, as weapons, my trusty sword, a blade which had served my father before me, and is of unequalled temper, and a pair of pocket pistols with which Enid had furnished me. The pistols had each two barrels, and, of course, the balls were small. But, at a few paces a little bullet can give a great wound, and I took one in my left hand, my sword in my right, and I stood firmly in the angle of the passage. I had barely presented my pistol when a cluster of faces swarmed into the opening.

It was all dark to their eyes, they knew not where I was, and they hung for an instant at the mouth of the passage. It was to my advantage to quickly deepen this unwillingness to advance, and I steadily discharged both barrels of the pistol. The shots struck home among the crowd, and it melted away with mingled cries of pain and fury. Then two swift figures sprang into the narrow gap, one from either side, laid pikes before them and ran in, thinking to bear me down with their greater reach. This attack was mere foolishness and delivered in the blindness of rage, a passion to which the Celtic temper is prone, and which leads them very often to vain attempts, as in this case.

For the two men, being of the Mervyn faction and ignorant of the house, knew not of the bend in the passage, and dashed their pike-heads against the wall. Meeting so unyielding a substance, the pikes flew from their hands, and they themselves rolled down headlong. As they rose I cut each of them shrewdly over the head, for had they made another step forward, they would have been within grappling distance, and to be seized by one of them would have been fatal since the whole crowd would have followed up at a cry. The sting of the blade quickly let out their fury, and, without attempting to pick up their weapons, they scrambled down the passage and out of my sight, one of them groaning heartily.

I stepped back in shelter of the wall and so, when a couple of muskets were presented and discharged, the bullets flew by me harmlessly. I could see nothing of those who fired save the hands, and several volleys were poured in this fashion into my retreat. Some of the bullets glanced round the outer angle of the bend, which was a smooth curve and, traversing the whole length of the passage, struck into the door. Time and again they whizzed by me, but by keeping myself flat against the inner angle, I escaped untouched. The firing ceased, and I peered out again. Thick, eddying clouds of smoke obscured my view, and then a bright red glare struck into them as, with steady, cautious step, as fresh party of my enemies came upon me.

The move was well planned. Two men were in front ready with their weapons; behind them a tall fellow held a blazing torch on high to light them to the attack. Thus I must fight with the light in my eyes, and they in complete shadow. I knew my assailants at a glance; they were the duellist and his cousin. The duellist was a little the foremost, and he held a pistol in his left hand. This I dreaded much more than the sword in his right, and I drew my remaining pistol also. Yet I was unwilling to spend my last shots till utterly compelled, and I dropped upon one knee and uttered a low, melancholy groan. The duellist stepped out briskly upon hearing this, and I was on him before he knew how close he was to my lair.

Project Voyage

I had marked his left arm from the beginning of my spring, and my sword was through his wrist, held out stiffly, pistol in hand, before he could crook his finger on the trigger.

The pistol rattled on the boards at my feet, and his companion fired as I leapt back. The noise in the confined space was deafening, but the bullet did no more than rip a shred from the shoulder of my coat.

With a shriek of pain, the duellist lunged fiercely at me.

I turned his sword aside, and whipped up my blade in time to guard a cut from his companion. The fellow with the torch understood his business, for he now lowered the leaping red flame until it was just above his leader's shoulders and directly level with my eyes.

The two swords springing out at me were lined with bright streaks as their polished surfaces caught the light, and them I could see plainly enough. But the eyes of my adversaries I could not see, and it is the eye which tells everything to one who knows how to read his enemy's intentions.

I fell back slowly a couple of steps, for the passage narrowed as it approached the inner door. My foes pressed on me together and eagerly, striking and shouting in triumph as I retreated. Then the lessening room warned them that they could not come on abreast, and, both eager to deal, as they expected, the finishing blow, the two of them bounded out at the same moment to take the lead.

As I had calculated, they clashed with, and jostled, each other roughly. For the instant neither would give way, and the advantage was mine if swiftly followed up. I promise you I made no laggard business of it. I had not forgotten the duellist's advice to his brother when I lay under Whitesock, and, knowing he was the more dangerous enemy, I gave him the point with my full weight behind it, running him clean through, and slashing the other severely across the shoulder of his sword arm.

Down went the first all in a heap, and the second staggered back. The big fellow with the torch bounded at me like a wolf, striking madly at me with the blazing brand. So sudden was his attack that the leaping flame was at my eyes before I could pull myself together to meet this new mode of warfare.

I raised my arm, and he struck it furiously with the great splinter of burning bog wood. The light, flaky wood shattered into a thousand fragments, covering me with sparks and flaming tinder, while I repaid him with a thrust which drove him howling back. With a few hasty sweeps of the hand I freed myself from the shreds of the torch and stood to my guard again.

It was some moments before I could see clearly, for the glare of the flame had dazzled my eyes. Where my enemies were I knew not, and I swung my sword from wall to wall, high and low before me, to be sure that all was clear in my front. As my eyes began to do their wonted service, I heard a dragging noise, and saw the torch-bearer drawing away the body of the duellist, who began to utter choking groans as he was moved.

The other man had already retreated, and though it would have been easy for me to cut off the two at hand, yet I could not find it in my heart to attack the faithful fellow, who, wounded himself, was succouring his master.

I trampled out the glowing fragments which littered the floor, drew a deep breath, and thought gratefully of the stout-hearted Siani guarding the window within. But for her my case would be hopeless. A single assailant in the rear would make a swift end of the business. The day was now wearing on and the light grew fainter in the gallery, and in consequence my narrow fortress became duskier than ever.

Five, ten minutes passed, and no fresh attempt was set on foot. I posted myself at the angle and kept a keen look-out, but saw no one. A continued mutter of voices warned me that plenty of foes were lurking near the narrow entrance to my den, but they gave no other sign of their presence.

Suddenly I jumped in sheer fright. My nerves were strained to expect but one thing, and that was a rush from the gallery, and when a loud, hollow stroke rang out at my elbow on the other side of the wall upon which I leant, I shook with surprise. Several dull-sounding blows were given, and then—clang! clang!—an iron bar rang upon stone.

I was at no loss to explain their movements, and bit my under-lip till the blood ran, as I cudgelled my perplexed brain for some way of meeting this clever plan. My enemies were within a couple of feet of me knocking a hole in the wall.

They had skilfully chosen a point which would rake the lower end of the passage. Once a gap was made, they had but to thrust the muzzle of a musket through and my flank was turned, my fortress untenable.

Luckily the partition walls in that stout old house were soundly built of quarried stone, and the clinking box had a good twenty minutes' work before it, ere the plaster on my side would be reached.

To retreat to the room behind me was useless. It was big enough to admit a score to hack at me, and I dismissed the idea instantly. I sent my thoughts out, and ran in mind over the whole house with which I had become quite familiar. The gallery, the wide stairs, the hall, the ponderous door, the hillside without, these strung themselves before my inner eye, and I wondered if a dash were possible. But I could not help shaking my head as I counted the risks. Of a sudden, my thoughts, as it seemed of their own will, turned and ran upstairs. I saw the flights of broad, shallow steps, the long corridor on the next floor, with its rows of doors opening to the garrets, where slept servants and retainers; a clumsy ladder leading to a trap-door which gave entrance to a chamber in the roof, and I caught my breath at the idea which flashed into my mind.

"An impregnable fortress," thought I, "could I but reach it!—an impregnable fortress. They dare do nothing but starve me out of it, and much might happen before then."

I felt a burning eagerness to try my fate at once. I slipped out of my boots, tied my sword to my wrist by a kerchief for fear it should be struck from my hand, took a tight grip of my loaded pistol and made a cautious step or two down the outer end of the passage. Inch by inch I drew on until I was but a yard from the mouth, and I felt sure that none of the guard was very close to the opening. Then, like a hare from her form, I darted out at full speed.

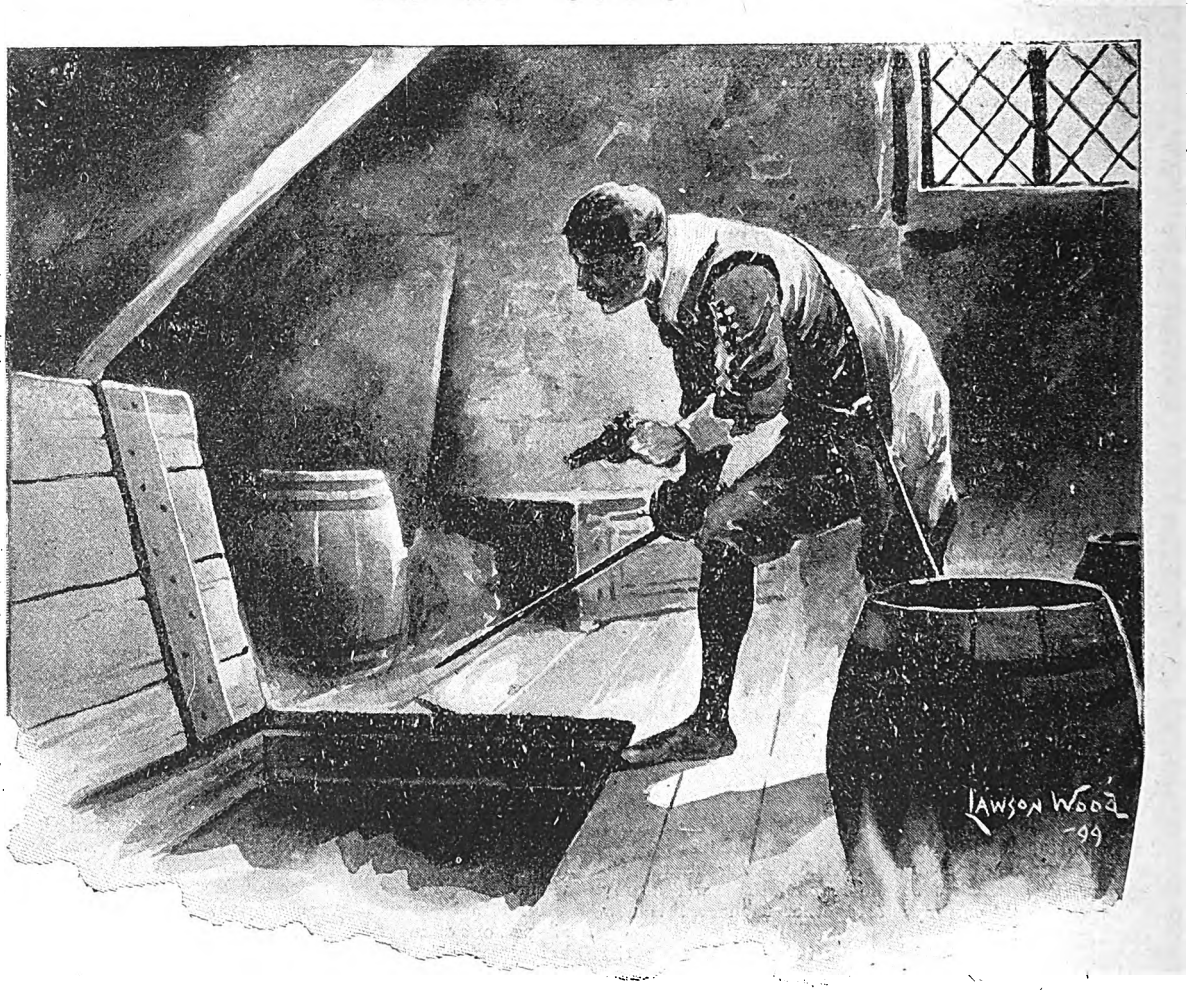
A great roar of surprise went up and a dozen men sprang at me at once. Two or three pistols were fired at random, but the balls went wide of me, and I passed clear through the crowd to the further side of the gallery. Every one of the band stationed here was at once filled with the same idea.

They never dreamt but that I was rushing for the stairs and the hall, and they swung in a yelling wave to the stair-head to cut me off. This played my game to a nicety, and left fully open the flight on the opposite side leading to the next floor. Up I went, three steps at a bound, followed by a second cry of surprise at seeing me, as they thought, plunge deeper into the trap. Then there was a thunderous pounding of heavy boots as they charged after me. But my start was too good, and when the first face appeared at the head of the stairs I was already lifting the trap.

I flung it back, bounded in, hurled the unfastened ladder down with a crash to the boards below, and roared triumphantly:

"Now, I am your master. Lay but a figner on that ladder to follow me and I will blow you and the house to fragments."

No one, perhaps, understood my words, but all belonging to Nant-y-Bryn knew very well where I was, and what I meant. The news swiftly spread to the strangers and



"Lay but a finger on that ladder to follow me, and I will blow you and the house to fragments."

there was an instant flight. The terrific clatter descended and descended, and before long the upper part of the house was as silent as the grave. I stood in the loft where the powder was stored, and within a couple of feet of my pistol muzzle was a lidless cask three parts filled with the coarse, black grains.

CHAPTER XXI.

In the Powder-Loft.

I thrust my pistol back into my pocket and looked about me at my ease. A desperate man and a couple of hundredweights of powder would be allowed a wide birth, so much was clear, and I need fear no interference for the present. I had been in the loft several times before with Owain, but, coming merely to fetch powder and down again at once, I had given no particular attention to the place.

I must now take a more careful survey of it lest some other door should lead into it, and I be taken by surprise. I let the trap down into its place and dragged upon it a great piece of lead stored there for bullet moulding. No one could lift it now without giving me warning, and I began to move about the room scanning every corner eagerly. The loft was built in the very ridge of the roof, was about sixteen feet wide, and ran the whole length of the house. It was possible to stand up only in the middle, the slant of the roof forbidding such a position elsewhere.

There was a window in each end, the western one, close to me, bright with the evening light, the eastern one looking far and dim. I made haste to traverse the long, wedge-shaped place while the light lasted. It was empty of all save the ammunition stored at the western end, that was certain, but the huge, massy beams of the roof made the eastern half so dusky that it was impossible to search for trap-doors or other openings. I returned to the better lighted part and knelt down at the window, which was near the floor. Almost the first thing I saw was Whitesock. She stood upon the hillside two hundred yards from the house, her head and tail up, and an air of curiosity and wonder distinct in every turn of her attitude.

Next I saw three men creeping to surround her. They posted themselves in a circle and moved gently upon her. She remained perfectly quiet till they were within a dozen yards, her nose up, snuffing the air impatiently, and marvelling, doubtless, where I could be, then she turned and was off like lightning. Up the hill she went, bound upon bound, her pursuers straining in the rear. She ran some distance, then paused to look back. A tiny, squat figure shot into sight on top of a boulder beside the mare, and made a flying leap at her.

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It lighted on its stomach, dropping on the saddle at right angles to her back. I saw the arms spread and the heels stuck stiffly out to gain a balance, and then the shock-headed dwarf harper, for I had recognised him, pivoted himself about, dropped his short legs, stuck his feet into the stirrup leathers, and waved his hand to the three runners.

It would have been more to his purpose had he taken a handful of mane to hold on by, for Whitesock clapped her head between her forelegs and shot her heels high into the air. The harper, without a doubt, had a safe seat on a mountain pony not much bigger than a rat, but this was a notch beyond his powers, for away he went whirling through the air, and bringing up, head first, on the grass.

His neck, however, was surely destined to be broken by other means since he was up in a moment. Whitesock trotted on as soon as she was rid of him, and passed him just as he rose. He ran after her. Forty yards further she disappeared over a rise, the harper vanished at her tail in full pursuit, and, a minute later, the three men went after the harper.

All this, taking place to the west of me, in the afterglow of a clear, brilliant sky, was in full sight, and I watched eagerly for the next move. I could not see into the valley beyond the rise, but I commanded the further slope entirely, and before long I saw Whitesock canter up it alone, stand for a few moments, then strike away southward and begin to circle back towards the house where she knew very well that I was.

Minute after minute passed and there was no sign of the harper or the three men who had pursued from Nant-y-Bryn. No one ran after the mare, no one came back. I whistled softly between my teeth as the idea dawned upon me that the three men never would come back. The harper was not there alone, and the unlucky fellows had run into an ambush.

A slight scraping on the floor below fetched me from the window to the trap at a bound. Someone was trying to lift the ladder into place.

"Who is there?" I challenged.

"Well, it is me," said a familiar voice.

I swung away the lead and flung up the trap-door.

"Siani," said I, "is your mistress safe?"

"Yes, she is," said Siani.

"And you?" I continued. "How did you come off?"

"I am all right," answered Siani.

"Did anyone try to get up through the window?"

"One," said Siani with a grin. "He was a stranger, so I let him come up half and then cut the stuff. He tumble very hard."

"Siani," said I "you are a girl of a thousand, and I am very grateful to you. Is there any way of getting into the loft except by the trap-door here?"

"None at all," said Siani. "I go now to Miss Enid. Here are the boots."

I saw for the first time that she had brought the boots I had left behind in my flight. I thanked her, and asked her to leave them where she stood. I had no need of them in the loft, and it would be quieter work to scramble up and down, if need should be, without them. She went away, and I sat down at the edge of the trap, my feet dangling, my eyes fixed on the stair corner where danger must first show itself, and my thoughts busy on the situation. After a while I remembered my empty pistol. A bag of large swan-shot stood close at hand, and I loaded it from that. Then I swung myself over the side of the opening and dropped lightly to the floor below. I advanced stealthily to the head of the stairs and peered down. The house lay as silent in the gathering dusk as if I were the only living soul in it.

The silence was portentous, and inspired me with caution, not confidence. I slipped back, and gently lifted the ladder into place that my way of retreat might be clear, then returned to the stair head. It grew darker and darker, and I ventured a few steps down to a point where I could catch a glimpse of the hall. No sign of light, or sound, or movement. I felt certain there was a trap laid for me if I went further, so I returned. My foot touched something as I crept up again. I put my hand down and found that a carbine had been flung away on the stairs by one of the flying band.

I picked it up and carried it back with me. Upon trial I found it was loaded, and I propped it handy against the stair rail and resumed my watch.

The night had now fallen as dark as it would be, yet of black darkness there was none, for the sky was frosty clear and filled with twinkling stars, burning their brightest, and sending through the narrow casements a faint, grey shimmer. My eyes, too, were thoroughly at home in the pale light, for I had known no other since the night fell, and when a silent, creeping figure came slowly up the stairs from the hall I saw it. Another and another followed, until a cluster of five men stood in the gallery.

It is very likely that they had come from a lighted room in a part of the house out of my sight, and so believed themselves surrounded by an impenetrable darkness. The while they gathered a distant sound came to my ears. It was a long, shrill, faint scream, accompanied by a hollow rapping. There was a note of warning in the sounds. Luckily, I had no need of it, for my eye was fixed upon the group below.

My assailants stood several moments, groping among one another, to be sure that they had gathered together, and I think that the silence and the gloom fingered at their hearts even more surely than they identified each other by sense of touch.

I had laid my hand on the carbine, thinking to follow the shot with pistol and sword, but I drew back. The five stepped noiselessly forward, and I saw that the leader bore some long object. I made two bounds up the ladder to the loft, took a double handful of swan-shot, and returned. They were half way up to me when I got back, but moving very slowly and cautiously. Primed, as I found out afterwards, by promises and drink, they had started out gaily enough, and now the darkness and the strain of their secret advance were telling. One of them breathed out a long, quavering sigh, and two or three others caught their breath in sympathy. I leant forward and tossed the two handfuls of shot plump upon the black patch crawling up. An attack was never more simply and surely repulsed. The rain of tinkling, pattering, rolling shot fetched out an instant cry, sharp, short shrieks of nervous terror.

A heavy body was dropped upon the stairs, and the five men bounded down, screaming as they ran. I had felt perfectly certain that their quivering nerves needed but a prick to jar every man out of tune, for I had learnt to know them a little, and I laughed aloud as they ran. At once, as if a signal had been given, the policy of silence was thrown up. Lights flashed and voices sounded in the hall below, threats, couched in very shaky English, were hurled up at me, and shots fired, the bullets burying themselves harmlessly in wall or ceiling. On the last flight of steps lay a light ladder. It had been carried by the leader of the storming party to spare them lifting into place, as they expected, the clumsy one I had flung down, and had been thrown aside in the flight.

As for me, I waited contentedly in my fortress, feeling perfectly certain that the coming night was to see some strange things, and only longing to get some glimpse of my dear mistress, and be sure that she was safe amid this turmoil. Within five minutes this wish was gratified. I saw her sweep swiftly into sight, turn along the gallery, and disappear. She went in the direction of Owain's room, and I knew that she was going to watch by him. She bore herself with a proud lift of the head, an air of wounded dignity, which set my nostrils quivering with the idea that someone had offended her, or offered her insult.

She was, after an interval, followed by Siani, and the latter was undisguisedly in a rage, shaking her fist and spluttering gutterals which sounded like threats at someone below.

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CHAPTER XXII.

The Tables Turned.

With the failure of the attempt to take me off my guard, the ordinary life of the house was, in the main, resumed, and, as I sat up aloft in the darkness, women came and went on errands, twice or thrice men appeared in the gallery, and, save that no one seemed inclined to come my way, the place assumed its usual aspect after dark and the lighting of the lamps.

Of noise there was plenty, and to spare. Uproarious voices disputed, quarrelled, shouted each other down, and made a riot in the lower regions. Now and again a snatch of a drunken song was bellowed out, and it was plain that my uncle's strong ale was flowing freely. Of him I had seen never a sign since he came up to the spot where the duel was fought, and though, nominally, there was no dispute between us, yet I felt sure that he saw where matters stood, and why I was haunting Nant-y-Bryn. Half-an-hour passed, and then I heard a couple of fellows talking thickly together on the lower stairs, and the sound of unsteady feet pounding up.

In a moment two men came in sight. Both wore bloody bandages about their heads, and were, I believe, the pike-men who had charged the wall in the passage, and whose crowns I had slashed there. Upon reaching the gallery they came to a pause and looked earnestly up to the darkness which hid me. One shook a fist in my direction, then tapped his comrade on the breast in drunken gravity, and held earnest conversation with him.

As this passed in their own tongue I knew not its purport, but the other fellow, too tipsy to stand upright without support, leant against the oaken gallery rail and nodded his head sagely to every observation. It looked as if they were coming in pot-valiant mood to beat up my quarters and avenge their sliced polls. Their weapons testified to the state of their wits. The one who was haranguing carried a short sword, the other held a heavy stick in his left hand and a great leathern jack in his right.

Presently the jack went up to his lips, back went his head, and he took a hearty draught. Then he handed the vessel to his companion with an emphatic nod, and shook his stick at me in turn. While the man with the sword drank, the fellow with the club, preserving an immovable solemnity of face, began to strike thunderous blows upon the stout rail and to bellow a resounding stave. Almost with the first words of his song, Siani rushed up to him and began to speak excitedly.

He took not the least notice of her, and, in another moment, Enid stood before him, pointing downstairs, and commanding him to leave the gallery. With a cry of drunken fury he turned short upon her and aimed a blow with his fist. Siani was between them like lightning and received the blow upon her shoulder. The force was such, however, as to hurl her violently against her mistress, and both went headlong to the floor, Enid striking her head against one of the heavy, clumsy chairs with which the gallery was furnished. Choking with rage, I darted down the stairs, and flew upon the ruffian now swinging up his club to strike at the prostrate and defenceless women.

The carbine was in my hand, but at such close quarters I dared not use shot. I reversed it as I ran, gripped the barrel in my right hand a few inches below the trigger, and dashed the stock into the face of my foe.

The crashing blow took him squarely across the jaw and cheek, and down he went, the blood spouting from nose, and mouth, and ears. I turned upon the second fellow, who was just raising his sword in slow, tipsy fashion. Him I struck a butting blow which took him in the chest and sent him spinning down stair after stair till he reached the flags of the hall. Turning, I found Siani already on her feet, and half lifting her mistress.

I flung away the carbine, sprang forward, took the dear burden from her, and hurried to my lair as a shouting, curious crowd ran on us from below. I made two steps along the upper gallery, laid Enid down in the shelter of the wall, and jumped back to hold the stair head. Siani had followed at my heels, and ran to her mistress.

A noisy mob was gathered in the gallery about the fallen man, several reeling on their feet, all shouting one thing or another at the top of their voices, wrangling, yelling, shaking fists towards the darkness that hid me, full of the rage of drink, yet none daring to set foot towards my hold. My anger was such that I would have slain the whole batch of rogues at a blow had it lain in my power. I poured into the crowd every shot I could muster, the swan-shot and the bullets from the second pistol.

They howled in affright at this second shower of lead, and ran to cover, two or three groaning dismally as if the bullets had found their billet, a thing likely enough at so short a range, and the place was clear again.

"How is she, Siani?" I whispered anxiously.

"She is quite well," answered the sweetest voice in the world. "I was only giddy for the moment. Have they hurt you at all?"

"Not a scratch," said I. "I have had the most wonderful fortune."

"And your head?" she asked.

"It smarts a little," I replied, "nothing more."

"Was not an attempt made a while back to do something?" asked Enid.

I laughed, and told the story of the two handfuls of swan-shot.

"I was sure of it," she said. "I was in the kitchen giving some orders to the women there, and Siani was with me, when the door was suddenly slammed and held against us. I felt sure it was to prevent any warning being given to you of some plan, but Siani screamed as loudly as she could and took off her shoe and beat the door with the heel."

"I heard it plainly," I replied—"plainly. There was a distinct sound of warning in it, too, though I had already seen them and was prepared."

"I think it was that," went on Enid, "which made the strangers angry with us."

"And it is all my fault," said I.

"Oh, no, no," she cried. "It is I who should beg your forgiveness for leading you into all this."

"And pray," said I, "what would my case be at this moment if you had not exerted your influence to save me? Had you left me on the hillside I should have been shot or stabbed within a minute of your back being turned. Whitesock could not fend off bullets, and I had been an instant target but for your goodness to me."

She drew a long breath and there was silence for a few moments. She stood up and stepped forward.

"Surely," said I, "you do not think of going down again?"

"I ought to be——" she began, then stopped.

"Very good," I returned, "if you wish it. I will come with you and see that you are unmolested as far as I can compass it."

"Oh, no," she said hurriedly, "oh, no, no! You must not do so; you must not leave this secure post."

"And I am to sit here then in comparative security and picture you somewhere below exposed to the insults of drunken ruffians?"

"You could escape," said she. "I am sure you could escape. There is no watch posted about the house; all are indoors engaged too much in their drink and quarrelling to give any attention to what goes on without."

"Ay," I returned, "escape easily enough at present, I believe. It would be simple to slip down from a window and whistle to Whitesock, who, thanks again to you, is wandering somewhere at hand on the hillside."

"And you will?" she whispered eagerly.

"And I will not," I whispered back. "What, jog all over the hills and leave you here, uncertain what may happen, you whom I love, oh, so dearly!"

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Siani had vanished somewhere, and I put my arm about Enid and drew her closely to me and laid my cheek against the soft velvet of hers.

"No, no," I went on; "from this time your fortune is my fortune. I am all alone in the world, and you——"

I paused, vexed at my stupidity in bringing up such thoughts, and ten times more so when I felt warm tears roll from her cheek to mine.

"Forgive my clumsy tongue," I whispered. "I only meant that we must be all in all to each other. Escape is the word, truly enough, but we shall go together, and ride away across the hills and get married. Do you agree?"

She pressed her cheek a little tighter for answer, and my heart leapt up as lightly as though danger and death were far away instead of all around. Soft footsteps were heard gliding towards us, and Enid drew a little away from me. It was Siani returning from her own room, which was on this floor, and bearing with her a warm cloak, in which she wrapped her mistress.

"Well done, Siani," said I, for the night was growing very cold. "Now," I went on, "could you find me another roll of linen stuff like that one I had?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Siani; "the room to keep them is up here." And away she went again.

"Then you will go to-night," said my love, laying her hand upon my arm. "Oh, do go, and I will only wait till after——"

"Dearest," said I, "I will press you to nothing. If the place quiets, and these rascals from a distance are got rid of, I believe you would be safe here once more, and I will go my ways and come again for you before long. But, as matters are, I will not budge an inch from your side."

"And yet you sent Siani for the cloth?" she said.

"Yes," I returned, "for I will make preparations to fit any case. And there are several possible turns to to-night's work."

Siani came back with the roll, dropped it at my feet, shot down the stairs, fell on hands and knees at the foot, and glided along the gallery like a snake.

Minute after minute passed, and at last Siani crept into sight again in the fashion she had departed, but now laden like a packhorse. She dragged after her a pair of great, bulging saddle-bags, and a dark-red riding dress, held in her teeth, trailed after her. I slipped down the stairs, relieved her of the saddle-bags, and ran back. She came closely after me, the dress flung over her arm.

"Why, Siani," said I, "you read my very thoughts."

The keen-witted girl was doing exactly what I had wished for, yet scarce known how to set on foot. She had come to the conclusion her mistress would not be left behind, and here she was getting things to hand.

Suddenly the keen tinkle and clash of steel against steel rose to my ears. I ran down a few steps and peeped into the hall below. The ill-feeling and drunken fury had run to blows, and a couple of men were hard at it in ding-dong fashion, hacking and hewing at each other furiously, while their companions were drawn up in bands on either side of the place yelling encouragement to the combatants. Within a dozen blows the duel was decided. The Nant-y-Bryn man failed to parry a savage cut at the head and went down all in a heap with his skull split across.

This was the signal for a general combat. Three or four friends of the fallen man sprang in and struck at the victor, whose companions were no less ready to save him than the others were anxious for revenge, and, upon the instant, a mad hurly-burly of battle raged within the hall. I glanced upwards. Enid had disappeared, and I turned my eyes again upon the turmoil below. Swords rose and fell, pistols cracked, shouts and yells rang out, and a reek of thick vapour gathered over them.

"There wants but one thing now," thought I. "Where are the 'Red Men of the Dusk'?"

(To be continued.)

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THE PADRE'S CATS.

PADRE MATEO VERDUGO was the venerable priest in charge of an Indian mission near the coast of California. The mission is now a majestic ruin; but sixty years ago Padre Mateo was a busy man.

One morning, while the sacristan slept, Padre Mateo sat outside his door with a big book on his knees.

The padre had almost fallen asleep, when, hearing the patter of bare feet, he looked up to see dark-skinned boys carrying a litter of kittens towards the creek.

"*Qué!* *Qué!*" cried the padre, rubbing his eyes. "Would you destroy the poor kittens?"

"*Si*, padre," replied one little Indian.

"*Para qué?*" questioned the priest.

"They are too many, padre," answered the little Indian, poking his great toe in the dust.

"But wait. The pretty things! They have not yet beheld the light of day. Give them to me," cried the benignant priest. "They shall not perish, for I will care for them myself. Are they not pretty, my worthy Guadaloupe? Open thine eyes for one instant."

Had the sacristan forseen the consequences, he would have made remonstrance before the padre's passion strengthened; but, being sleepy and selfish, Guadaloupe settled himself for another nap. At the end of the second year Padre Mateo's cats were the bane of the sacristan's life.

"Must I," thought he, with rising spleen, "I, who am seventy years old and have a stitch in my back; must I, besides dusting the altar and ringing four heavy bells and 'tending the padre's house, must I do obedience to yowling cats? *Es vergonzoso*, indeed!"

Had he not feared the padre's malediction he would have murdered the creatures without compunction. The cats flourished, and the padre's fondness increased, and Guadaloupe was scolded more frequently than ever. "Heart of stone!" the priest would exclaim, "would you let them starve? I am sure you gave no milk to Carmina's new kittens this day? and well you know she has not nourishment enough for them all. You shall do penance for your iniquities."

"But, your excellency," the sacristan would remonstrate with great humility, "I had no milk left after supplying the sick babe of the squaw who died last week. Surely the kittens can wait."

"Wait?" stormed the padre. "Are they not wailing from hunger even now? Their cries pierce my heart. How can I leave them to your charge, and go away for eight long days—and go I must!"

At these words hope sprang up anew in Guadaloupe's perfidious heart.

"Art thou going away, reverend padre?" he asked meekly. "Am I, indeed, to be left alone for eight days?"

"It is true," replied the priest sadly. "I must go. I am summoned to report to my superior at San Luis Rey; and the journey will require eight days. But how can I go? The Indians can get along well enough, but what, I ask you, heart of wood, will become of my cats?"

Next day, as Padre Mateo trudged slowly down the road, a sardonic smile came upon the countenance of the wicked sacristan.

It was nearing mid-day. Already Ignatius, the oldest and leanest and hungriest of the cats, had appeared, sniffing, to learn if dinner was being cooked.

"I will teach thee—villain," muttered the sacristan fiercely, as he busied himself building a fire. "I will teach thee to sit and glower at me while I work till my body shakes with weariness."

When the meal was ready Guadaloupe went to the door.

"Come, Carlotta, dearest! Come, Pedro! Come, Carlos!" he called tenderly. "Hasten within, for thy dinner waits! Be quick, then, all of you!"

When the cats were seated, Guadaloupe, after tightly closing the doors, hurried to the chapel. From the altar he selected the largest crucifix, and, bearing this in the left hand, and a great whip behind him in his right hand, he returned to the padre's house.

Holding the crucifix before him, the sacristan entered the room where the cats were assembled. "Now, wretches! brutes! villains!" he shouted—and at each word came a cut from the whip—"fiends! monsters! ungrateful beasts. Receive your punishment!"

The astonished creatures leapt from their seats and tore madly about the little room, but they could not get beyond the reach of Guadaloupe's whip. He lashed right and left, still holding the crucifix before him, till at last he could no longer wield the whip.

Thrice each day a similar scene was enacted, till at the sight of the crucifix the creatures would spring wildly from their seats and seek to escape.

Padre Mateo returned at night, and was welcomed cordially by the perfidious sacristan. In the morning Guadaloupe called the padre to the breakfast meal.

"But—where are the cats?" asked Padre Mateo.

Guadaloupe shrugged his shoulders, with a look of sadness:

"Speak not of them, reverend father!"

"But I want my cats."

"Your excellency—I fear you have been befooled."

"Where are my cats?"

"Well, then, I will call them, venerable padre, but first let me speak. I fear the creatures are not mere common cats, else why did they conduct themselves so strangely in your absence?"

"Nonsense!" roared the padre. "Call my cats!"

"But wait, your reverence. As your reverence knows, it is my duty always, on a Thursday, to clean the candlesticks and the sacred crucifixes on the altar. Your reverence well remembers that it is my custom always to bring them outside into the air that the dust may not soil the altar cloth. What will your reverence think when I reveal the wickedness of your reverence's cats? They are all devils, surely, else why should they run from the crucifix, as the evil one would flee?"

"Nonsense!" roared the padre. "Call my cats!"

So the sacristan did as he was bid.

"Now," said Padre Mateo triumphantly, when all the cats were seated about the table, "we will test this thing! Bring in the crucifix."

Without a word the wicked sacristan flew to the chapel, and returned holding the sacred emblem aloft before him. At its appearence the unhappy cats gave a discordant howl of despair, and fled.

As the last swollen tail disappeared the padre gave a gasp and caught the sacristan's arm for support.

"Devils!" he wailed at last, wringing his trembling hands. "Things of evil! Alas! alas! How ye have deceived me! My worthy Guadaloupe, thou hast spoken truly—but—oh! how I have loved them!

"Get thy gun, my Guadaloupe. They are fiends! Get thy gun and rend their wicked hearts!" F. G. H.

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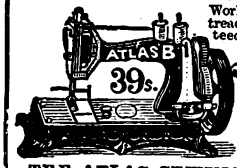

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LAST WRITTEN, FIRST READ.

Ascertain at once if the Fresh Air Fund inset is in this copy of Short Stories. It should be. I hope that you will not throw it away, but will send it to us, well filled.

Sunny.—According to the lists prepared by registrars of mean annual sunshine, Pembroke occupies the enviable position of being the sunniest spot in all England. It is, however, closely followed in this respect by Falmouth, Hastings, Eastbourne, Plymouth, and Blackpool, in the order given. The dullest spots in Britain appear to be Glasgow, London, and Glencarron, in the order given.

C. O. L.—It is a curious fact that in railway collisions nearly all the passengers who are asleep escape the bad effects of shaking and concussion, Nature's own anæsthetic preserving them.

Sall.—Only one man in every fifty in the British Army are over six feet in height.

E. G.—The total length of the streets, avenues, boulevards, bridges, quays, and thoroughfares of Paris generally is set down at about 800 miles, of which nearly 300 are planted with trees.

V.—The privilege of driving to the Vatican with a one-horse vehicle was granted to the Prussian Ambassador accredited to the Holy See owing to a curious circumstance. A Prussian ambassador some years ago drove up one day in a single-horse carriage and presented himself for admission at the gates of the Vatican leading into the court-yard; but, in pursuance of their orders, he was refused admission, except on foot, by the Swiss guard. Being forced to yield, he complained with some bitterness to Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State to Pius IX., who said he would refer the matter to his Holiness. Pius IX., upon hearing of the incident, immediately gave orders that henceforth his Excellency the Prussian Ambassador was to be allowed admittance however he came.

Alf.—Westminster Hall is the largest room in England unsupported by pillars.

Fare.—Women need, on the average, about nine-tenths the nourishment requisite for men.

T. L.—More than one-half of the weight of tea-leaves consists of woody fibre, a substance insoluble in water, and, therefore, incapable of yielding a particle of nutriment. The black teas appear to contain more of this fibre than the green.

Lingo.—The number of languages spoken in the known world is 2,523, of which 587 belong to Europe, 396 to Asia, 376 to Africa, and 1,164 to America.

W. C. C. gives the following interesting instance of the workings of conscience: "My wife placed several flower-pots on the dining-room window-sill, and found one morning that a pair were gone. This was in 1882, and six years afterwards they were returned by railway, packed very carefully, with the following note: 'Dear madam,—Several years ago I took from your window-sill the flower-pots I now return. Since that time my heart has changed, and I now feel it my duty to send you back the pots, with an expression of true sorrow for having ever taken them.'"

Mort.—In India the mean duration of life is only twenty-three years. In England it is forty-one years.

H. V.—The value of a half-crown, reckoned simply as silver and not as a coin, is subject to fluctuation. As a coin it can be produced in our mint at a cost of two shillings, 192 pence per pound sterling. The profit of minting is, therefore, four shillings on each pound in half-crowns, or 20 per cent. These profits of the mint only arise from the coinage of silver and copper, gold being coined free.

B. E.—The largest and oldest chain bridge in the world is said to be that of Kingtung, in China, where it forms a perfect road from the top of one mountain to another.

Q. U. is curious about the Queen's bedroom in Buckingham Palace, as he has heard that she has given orders that nobody should ever be permitted to view it.———Curiosity could not have been centred round a more unpretentious apartment. The bedstead and furniture are of the simplest description, but the room is crowded with pictures and photos of the Prince Consort. It is a veritable treasure-house of mementoes of Her Majesty's late husband. For the same reason, nobody is allowed to view the dressing-room adjoining it.

Ant.—The Indians of South America eat white ants, which they catch by pushing into the nest a grass stalk, which the ants seize and hold on to most tenaciously.

Leather.—The most costly leather in the world is known to the trade as piano leather. The secret of tanning piano leather is known only to a family of tanners in Thuringia, Germany. The leather has but one use—the covering of piano-keys. A peculiar thing about it is that the skins from which it is tanned are procured almost entirely in America. It is a peculiar kind of buckskin.

Loco.—The cough or puff of a railway engine is due to the abrupt emission of waste steam up the chimney. When moving slowly the coughs can, of course, be heard following each other quite distinctly, but when speed is put on the puffs come out one after the other much more rapidly, and when eighteen coughs a second are produced they cannot be separately distinguished by the ear. A locomotive running at the rate of nearly seventy miles an hour gives out twenty puffs of steam every second—that is, ten for each of its two cylinders.

Pop.—Over one-tenth of the people of the United States are negroes or Chinese.

Kin.—The estate of a person dying without next of kin, and not leaving a will, becomes the property of the Crown. In this way Her Majesty's Exchequer came into the possession, in 1876, of £140,000, left by a Miss Blake; in 1886, of £100,000, left by a Mr. Bird; and in 1887, of £200,000, left by a Mr. Heathcote.

C. R. O.—The crown is now used only for coronations and at the openings of Parliament. It is kept in the Tower.

Silk.—A fibre of silk one mile long weighs but twelve grains.

C. D.—The sea cucumber, one of the curious jelly bodies that inhabit the ocean, can practically efface himself when in danger by squeezing the water out of his body, and forcing himself into a narrow crack—so narrow as not to be visible to the naked eye. He can throw out nearly the whole of his inside, and yet live and grow it again.

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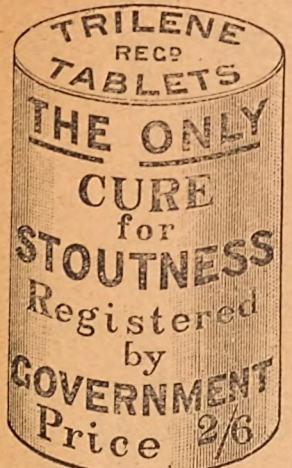

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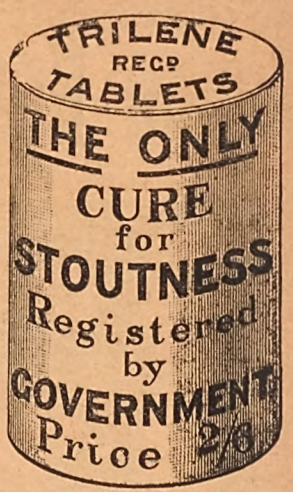

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 9st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr, Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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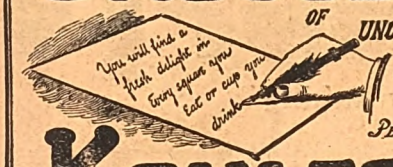
CHOCOLAT



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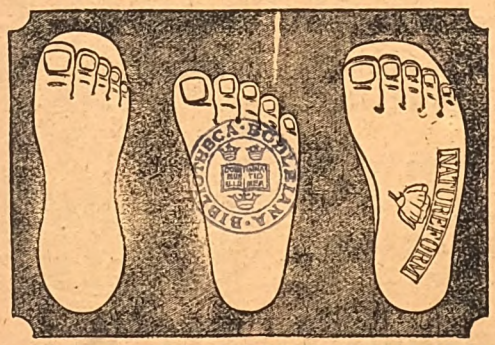

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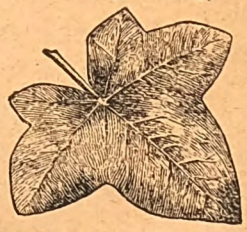

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By E. MILLS.

II.—A DAY WITH "MISS KIT."

"Miss Kit" was becoming quite accustomed to dressing by candlelight in that little verandah-room of hers at her uncle's station. Every morning when the station-bell clanged out the summons to the working day, Miss Kit ran to her door and peeped out at the faintly primrose east, and listened to the wild-duck flying in startled squads over the house as the black boy ran the horses through the ford of the winding creek. And then Kit and her uncle would eat a hurried breakfast in the big, dark dining-room, where the night shadows still lurked, and where Kit shivered in spite of the cape thrown over her trimly-built, dark-green habit.

Once in the saddle, however, with the red sun rays turning the woolshed windows to gold, and the thin smoke just beginning to rise from the cottages along the creek, she forgot that there were such thing as chilly downs and dark night shadows, for Miss Kit was only nineteen, and was having her first experience of cattle-station life, and the delights of spending whole days with the musterers. And the intoxication of the fresh morning breeze that has been sweeping over so many wide miles of country destitute (save for the home of a boundary rider or so) of human habitation, is a thing to be remembered for ever by those who have known it on the warm, fresh mornings of the Australian spring.

Martini Downs was a cattle station, and the mustering parties were large ones. Miss Kit knew most of the men, white and black, by name, now, and expected to be kept supplied in all "station information" by Chris Lee, the jackaroo, who rode with her when the boss was otherwise engaged. Sweet-faced Sydney girls were not a glut in the district, and Miss Kit's advent had created an excitement whose waves spread further than one might imagine.

She was not pretty exactly, but had a dear, round, little figure, and that gift of the gods (both of the upper and under worlds) "fascination," and was a flirt—not of circumstances only, but a flirt ingrained—through and through, from the top of her dusky-haired head to the tip of her small, neat shoes; and like all true flirts slightly cold-hearted, and not easily moved by the passions of herself or others.

She could no more help flashing long George Gordon (the head stockman) one of her slow, dreamy glances from her grey-black lashed eyes, when he picked the hoya for her, than she could have helped blinking if she looked at the sun, although she had, naturally, a strong bias of conservatism in her nature, which her life, as a rich, retired squatter's only daughter, had helped to foster.

Lee saw the glance, and said: "Isn't Gordon a fine-looking fellow, Miss Kit. By George, I wish I could ride one half as well as he can. He's a bit superior to the usual run of working men, too: reads a lot, you know."

"Ah!" said Miss Kit. "yes, he is good-looking: it's his figure and height chiefly, you know, and the picturesque cabbage-tree and 'get-up' altogether. Yes, he is a fine animal."

"Are you a beauty lover, Miss Kit?"

"I worship it—perhaps because I'm not beautiful myself. No, stop—I'm not fishing for a compliment, and nothing could undo a lesson I learnt once. Oh! a year ago, when I was staying near Euston, three of us had gone for a walk—myself, a girl friend of mine, who was seventeen and very beautiful, and a friend, a man friend, who—well, who cared for me, then. We came to a little stream, the sort that one is always coming across in New England country, smothered in wild violets and maiden-hair, and crawling with snakes and death-adders. No, don't look pleasantly excited, there isn't going to be a tragedy of any kind, only a moral lesson.

"Well, I jumped over it, and so did the man, and my girl friend, who was really timid, stood stock-still, her colour coming and going—such a colour, red as the heart of a damask rose, and her lovely little mouth was red, too, and she had the whitest of teeth, and the bluest of eyes, like stars, and the brightest, golden curls on her forehead, and was, moreover, largely made and well-developed, although she was so young—are you listening, Mr. Lee?"

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The gallop brought them level with the boss again.

"Oh, yes: but I was just going to say that all fellows don't admire tall girls," with a languishing glance at Miss Kit's diminutive figure.

"So my man friend assured me, thus my moral will suit both. Of course he ran to the rescue, and took my girl friend's hands. I wonder if you could realise the picture better if I told you that she was dressed in white and wore a white sun-bonnet, with lacy frills round her lovely, innocent face.

"And he looked at her as he helped her across—please remember that he was really fond of me—and that we both knew the beautiful friend was about as intellectual as a sheep, and quite as hopelessly stupid. Still, for all that, there was a look in the man's eyes which will never be in any man's eyes for me. Love, tenderness, passion, I have seen them all, but not the adoration, the worship—call it what you will—that comes to most men's eyes when they see a really beautiful woman; it's something quite distinct and apart from love."

"Were you jealous?" hazarded Chris. He did not quite understand his divinity always.

"Of course I was, wickedly jealous of her beauty; that was all, of course, for I knew the man liked me and always would. I saw the girl the other day; she was already beginning to run to the 'fleshy' and florid style, but oh, she was beautiful two years ago. All this is *à propos* of what—oh! George Gordon, the stockman, just to explain, you know, that we can worship the beauty, and not the man himself, or was it to explain the craving and longing all women have for personal loveliness. Beauty is only skin deep, Mr. Lee, so you men write, but your eyes tell a different tale. Now, please, don't say you have never liked pretty girls, hoping to reassure and compliment me—now, confess, you were just going to."

"I was, Miss Kit, and I mean it, too: somehow or other I never did——"

"Oh! race me down the hill," cried Kit, "and don't make it worse than ever. My sex is credited with having very little sense of humour, but I have my doubts if it's all on one side. Come on, Mr. Lee, Starlight is simply mad for a gallop."

The gallop brought them level with the boss again.

"The river paddock is a large one," he said, "keep near Lee, Kit, and if you knock up, he can ride home with you. We shall all divide after we leave these slip-rails."

"Knock up!" said Kit, scornfully, and she made a little move towards the keen-faced old Scotsman, who was her present guardian, and quite made up her mind to give young Lee the slip as soon as possible. She did not approve of being treated as a baby, and to be put in the charge of Chris Lee, who was no older than herself, with his boyish face and sunny curls, and ridiculous, pinky complexion, that never would burn brown, added largely to the insult; and so it was, when the sliprails passed and the men had scattered in various directions, that Miss Kit spied a white steer "just disappearing" into the reeds of a distant swamp.

"You haven't found one yet," said Kit, reproachfully: "in fact, I don't see how you could, very well, when you look at me all the time. Now, I suppose George Gordon and the other men will find hundreds."

Goaded into action by this veiled sarcasm, young Chris put spurs to his horse and galloped to the swamp, shouting to Kit to wait for him in the brigalows. No sooner was he out of sight than, giving Starlight her head, Miss Kit made off in a northerly direction, hoping to reach the river and appear at the camping-ground by dinner-time, in a manner befitting her independence.

Some hours later, long George Gordon the stockman, riding leisurely along the banks of the big Barwon River, came upon a gossamer veil hanging on the end of a branch, which overhung the cattle-track. He had seen that veil before, and in fact, had been thinking of its owner pretty continually during the last few days. There was a wide social gulf between Miss Kit, the rich station-owner's niece, who had been home to England and back, besides her other claims to exclusiveness, and George Gordon, his head stockman, and son to old Gordon, the shepherd of earlier days; but for all that, they were man and woman, and had been thrown together a good deal in one way and another during the mustering.

And there is a strange spell about an open-air life in the wide Australian bush that acts as a leveller to social distinctions.

Above all, Miss Kit was a flirt, and famed for her talent of being "all things to all men." That intuition which she trusted so rightly told her what style of woman this big fellow would most admire, so that when in his company she half-unconsciously became that woman. As for the man, it seemed to him that the ideal woman of his inmost thoughts had taken shape and substance.

Once he helped her to remount Starlight, and had glowed all over because her little foot lay in his hand a moment before she went up light as a bird.

Once she had asked him to get her some hoya flowers, and had smiled graciously when he brought them. Yes:

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that was all that had passed between them, but hot young blood takes fire easily, and the fire that never dies was lighted in George Gordon's breast and all his common-sense and reason could not quench it.

This was her gossamer, so she had been this way—strange, for when they all camped for dinner further up the river Miss Kit and Chris Lee had not turned up, and the boss had smiled triumphantly, saying:

"Ah, I thought the lassie was a bit tired, though she wouldn't own it, and no doubt finds her hammock and the grape-vines cooler than the river flats. But if they had passed this way they could not be home yet."

Still puzzling, Gordon untwisted the veil and put it in the bosom of his shirt, and pursued his way. A shrill neigh brought an answering one from his horse, who was a paddock companion of Miss Kit's favourite, Starlight: and seized with indefinable dread, Gordon galloped towards a grassy delta from which the sound came. The water had in some bygone flood cut deep hollows, and left ragged knolls (now covered with coarse, tussocky river grass) in the soft, silted soil, and the whole place and the flats beyond were golden with large, yellow buttercups.

Starlight, with trailing bridle, was feeding quietly about on a knoll, below which, comfortably settled among the tussocks and reeds lay Miss Kit.

"Oh!" she cried, "I am so glad you have come, George. I'm sure it's ages past dinner time, and I'm so hungry. Where are the others?"

"Camped long ago, miss—further up—why, you must have mistaken the place!"

"I thought Mr. Lee said the first bend I came to after leaving the brush fence. Isn't this it?"

"Well, it is, and it isn't, mi s—you see you've turned round and gone down instead of up. Let me make you some tea before you start home. I've my quart here."

"Ah, do! I'm dreadfully thirsty. And so I've missed the others altogether. Why, Gordon, it's a mercy you found me. I might have stayed here all night."

"Very likely," said George, soberly, as he gathered the sticks. "Your uncle thought you was home long ago."

George Gordon's grammar was decidedly faulty, although his voice, being rich and soft, hid the defects of speech a little—and Kit noticed the slip and smiled. She felt she could unbend a little as none of the other men or her right and proper chaperons were about, and the man was so undeniably handsome, although his skin was browned to the colour of dried apples.

Chris Lee was his superior in birth, breeding and wealth no doubt, but she was tired of callow boys (only women far older than Kit can really stand and appreciate the freshness and inexperience of adolescence) and it would be a change to talk to a working man on terms that were something like equality—and to find out if they really thought and acted quite differently from the men whom society destined as her companions.

Gordon made some good bush tea, and the girl found cake and ginger-bread and a sandwich in her saddle-bag, and insisted upon his taking some for afternoon tea, as she called it. Gordon let the still unmustered end of the river paddock "slide" and gave himself up to the dangerous pleasure of doing Queen Kit's bidding and "talking."

"Was he fond of reading?" she asked.

"Yes: of course he was—what bushman is not—he was reading a novel then, called 'His Heart's Desire' there was a lot in it about England—it must be a wonderful place—had Miss Kit seen any of the old houses or castles that had belonged to the same chap's family for hundreds of years?"

George Gordon . . . came across a gossamer veil hanging on the end of a branch.

Yes, Kit had stayed in one of them, a manor-house, really old, with a moat and drawbridge.

"But, for my part," said she, "I hate those old, uncomfortably built places; the rooms seemed full of ghosts, who scowled to see their things touched by irreverent, living, modern hands. There is such a musty sense of tragedies and bygone lives that should have been forgotten long ago. It's a thing one can't explain, some people call it a 'a special charm,' but I would far rather have a nice house built in my own lifetime according to my own ideas, than all the ill-drained castles and ghost-haunted old houses in Christendom. That's why I like Martini Downs so much," she said, "it's a comparatively new station yet, and hasn't any memories or tragedies."

"No," said Gordon, "it's been a lucky station in that way; no accidents to speak of. But I'd like to see one of them castles that the plucky chaps used to defend in old days, and a fellow would like to have one belonging to his people."

"No doubt you come of some of those old fighting Gordons, George—gipsy Gordons, you know. Now I come to think of it, mine is a gipsy name, too, Heron. Gordon and Heron. No wonder we are enjoying this picnic, gipsy's picnic, all the year round."

Gordon smiled, showing his strong, even, white teeth.

"There was a tale that my grandfather was a gipsy. I've heard tell—don't know—Miss Kit, but I think he was lagged for stealing a horse, anyway, I don't think I ever heard of a castle belonging to him!" And he laughed again.

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"Of course, he was a gipsy, George: and that is where you get your black eyes and black hair from. So you like old castles and musty ancestors —and I hate them, another of Fate's mistakes—you should be in my place, and I in yours. I can tell you I shocked the aunts and cousins at Herne Manor House. I wish I had your reverence—take off your hat, George and let me see if the bump is well-developed."

The young bushman took off his cabbagetree hat, and bent his head as directed: it was a shapely head, and Kit tapped it critically with one forefinger, just above the forehead.

"Yes: it's there," she said, "George, I'm afraid from what I can see also, that you are dreadfully serious and sentimental—I might have known it when you told me

He caught her in his arms again.

you enjoyed reading books with a title like 'His Heart's Desire.' What is your heart's desire, George, wealth, love, fame?"

But George looked away across the river, through the green aisles of the wooded flats, and was silent.

"You know what I mean," continued Kit, "they say everyone wants something more than anything else in the world, that if they were to have one wish, one only, gratified it would be that."

"Yes, Miss Kit, I do know what you mean."

"Ah! of course, well, your heart's desire is a very moderate one, I suppose—the overseership of Martini Downs, or a snug little place of your own, something, at any rate, that there is a possibility of being gratified?"

George rose and leant against the steep bank of the knoll before he replied. Miss Kit looked really pretty lying back amongst the feathery grasses; her hat had fallen off, and the warmth of the day had brought a rosy flush to her usually pale cheeks.

"A while back," he said slowly, "I don't think I fancied anything much, saving it was a bit of a selection of my own when I was too stiff and old to break in horses."

"And now?" The big grey eyes were questioning his own.

"Well, now it's different; I do want something—so badly that if I would have it and break my neck the moment after I got it, why I'd jump at the offer."

"Then I'm afraid there's a woman at the bottom of it—it is love after all that you want. Now, my heart's desire is so complex—so utterly impossible; I want happiness, beauty, power—oh! and a thousand things; I should never know which to choose. Now you only want a certain woman's love."

"I never said I wanted her love, Miss Kit; I don't know as I do want that, it would mean misery to her, and to me through her. She's not meant for such as me—it's best as it is."

"Then your heart's desire should be to be of such as are meant for her!"

"That's again impossible, Miss Kit; you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

I'm afraid Gordon pronounced the last word "year." But Kit had forgotten to be critical. She was charmed with this "new experience,"—this man who could follow her wayward fancies so easily, whose respectful manner altered not one jot although she was talking to him so freely.

And, above all, she was a beauty lover, and Gordon was very handsome. And more than that still Kit was a flirt, and if you put a duck in water you cannot blame it for swimming, and there was no one to remind her that she was making herself as charming as possible to her uncle's head stockman.

Then again, it was Australian noontide, and clouds of little white butterflies were dancing over the long reaches of buttercups, amongst which, on dry oases of ground, were islands of blue-bells and strips of white everlasting daisies, and the grass of the big swamp lower down was all dimpling with the breeze. That breeze was an excuse in itself, so intoxicating was the scent it bore with it from the groves of wattle and wild white jasmine.

"It must be a woman's love," said the girl. "Now tell me, George."

"No, Miss Kit"—gently, but firmly—"I can't do that."

"But you will tell me some day," coaxingly.

"No, I'm certain I never will."

"Oh, this is exciting," said Kit, adding to herself, "It must be Anna, the housemaid, she is always especially attentive to me; perhaps they want uncle to raise his wages."

"Could I help you to it?" she said aloud.

"Yes."

"Good gracious, have you wanted it for long?"

"No, yes; that is, more to-day than ever before, Miss Kit."

Miss Kit must have been very certain of the reliability of her intuitions as applied to this earnest-eyed young stockman, quite certain that he would take no advantage of her condescending familiarity, for she laughed long and merrily at his last words.

"Why, George, I believe it haunts your dreams," she said.

Gordon sprang up from his lowly seat at her feet, and

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flung his arms out with a passionate, unstudied gesture.

"Night and day," he cried. "Night and day, if I live to be a hundred, Miss Kit, I'll be no nigher it, and I'll want it my whole life long."

She was really curious, and sprang to her feet too, her habit falling all about her, in long, sloping folds. Alas, her besetting sin was curiosity (no doubt it helped to make her sweetly sympathetic), and forgetting all else under its influence she stretched out both her little gloveless hands and seized his big sun-browned ones, and looking up eagerly into his face:

"Tell me. It is the only thing I have ever asked you. Tell me," she cried.

When a certain point is reached in temptation, the average man yields; the point is an indefinite one, sometimes near, sometimes so far that it is scarcely touched. Gordon was twenty-five, strong, warm-blooded, and deeply in love, and the touch of those small, white, fluttering hands caused him to forget everything except that they were man and woman—everything except that his heart was filled with despairing love, that found its out et in the words:

"Yes, I will tell you—Heaven—but I love you, Miss Kit—love you too much to want you to love me. One kiss, that's all I want—one kiss, that's what I've been after wanting ever since I knew you."

The girl's hat was lying on the grass at her feet, and the rays of sunlight filtering through the over-arching boughs played lovingly about her sweet little face, with its half-shy, half mischievous eyes, and pretty red mouth.

George Gordon's arms were around her, tightening their hold, and yet she did not resist the electricity of his great, unselfish passion.

Something seemed to wake a faintly answering thrill in her heart, as if it were the heart of another Kit in a long forgotten world, who had loved and been beloved, with no barriers of circumstance between.

"Oh, why!" she cried; "why has this happened?"

"It's your own fault, for being yourself," he began wildly, then stopped as the sense of her words dawned on him, and unclasping his arms, he strove to put her from him, but she put both her little hands on his shoulders.

"George," she said, softly, "you may have your heart's desire."

Scarcely believing her, he caught her in his arms again and stooping, pressed his lips to hers.

Kit withdrew herself quickly, turning her hot, flushed face away. There was a silence for a moment—to the man it was as if he had tasted the supreme joy of heaven and the bitterness of hell during the silence, and then Kit said,

"And now, George, you had better get the horses."

Miss Kit's voice had the note of chilly dignity again, as she gave orders to her uncle's stockman. The mood was over, the reaction had set in.

Gordon walked over to the horses, and as he did so, Chris Lee came in sight.

He rode up at a quick trot to Miss Kit.

"So here you are," he said cheerfully, "safe and sound with George; the boss reckoned you were lost when I returned without you. That swamp nearly swamped me, Miss Kit; got into a deep hole, and my horse wouldn't swim, he rolled over instead, and got out without me. I was hours chasing him. Gordon can ride down and tell them you are safe, and I'll take you straight home. Gordon!"

"Yes, sir."

"Ride to the slip-rails and tell the boss that Miss Heron is all right. And he wants you to leave a message about the rations at Smith's. Don't forget to ask him."

"Yes, sir."

Gordon swung into the saddle, and rode slowly past; he half pulled up as he passed Miss Kit, but did not look at her as he said:

"Thank you, Miss Kit. I promise you that you'll never be sorry you was so good to me."

Kit flushed a little. "I kept my promise; see that you keep yours, George Gordon," she said.

Already the declining sun was sending level rays along the river flats, showing every stalk and leaf and slender star of the myriad buttercups distinctly. Already the shadows in the brigalow scrubs were deepening to purple. Looking back, George Gordon saw a girl's slender figure outlined a moment against the crimsoning west; then it disappeared, and George knew that his "day with Miss Kit" was over.

Dot, aged six (on the conclusion of song by celebrated tenor): "Papa, did that man make all that noise *on purpose?*"

An authoress says: "A kiss gives more pleasure than anything else in the world," and she ought to know. But a quibbling editor responds:

"That writer evidently never experienced the childish rapture of descending the stairs by sliding down the bannisters."

A chemist was called up at two o'clock the other morning by the ringing of his night bell. On opening the door, he found a damsel, who told him she was going to a picnic that morning, and was out of rouge. The impudent druggist turned her off with the assurance that he hadn't the stock to cover a cheek like hers.

Harry: "She has jilted me, and I know I shall die. The disappointment will kill me."

Aunt Hannah: "I know how disappointment affects one, Harry. But you'll get over it. I felt just as you do now when I sat that yaller hen on thirteen eggs, and only got just one poor chick out of the lot."

"Fire, fire, help!" screamed a lady from the drawing-room to the kitchen. Immediately the parlour-maid and the cook, followed by two defenders of the country and one policeman rushed into the room, where they found the mistress of the house quietly reclining on the sofa. "There, that will do," she said, "I only wanted to see how many followers were on the premises."

100,000 PRIZES,

Valued at £10,000,

ARE BEING GIVEN AWAY.

Full particulars appeared in last week's paper, and will appear in the next number. . . . .

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A Child of the Circus.

ABOVE the homely little inn which stood alone in the romantic valley in the midst of budding hedges and high firs the moon was slowly climbing.

In the upper storey a window was wide open, and a man's dark figure was distinctly outlined against the bright square of the window frame.

Wolfgang Hermes had been a late guest. He had disturbed the host in his night's rest, and had been obliged to leave his luggage in the traveller's room, where it was of no use to him.

The small oil-lamp which his host had placed for him on the table threw a dim light over the shabby contents of the humble attic room. He stepped back from the window, drew a chair to the table, and took out his pocket-book. He turned the leaves over and took from it a letter, which he slowly unfolded and read thus:

"MY DEAR SON,—Although I am accustomed to your extravagance, your last letter threw me into the greatest astonishment. Certainly you are quite correct when you write that since the death of your sister Gretchen I have cherished the wish to find a young girl who would fill her place in a measure; but that the child of a playing troupe will do this I cannot believe. Nevertheless, for love of you I will make the attempt and see whether this Wiarda is suited to family and domestic life. You may, therefore, bring me the foreign girl, dear Wolf, and in any case it will be a good thing to remove her from the life which she is leading.

"You must then in your turn promise me to listen afterwards to your mother's voice when she speaks of matters of vital interest to you. You may safely confide in me, for the eye of love is keen, and what love could be greater than that of a mother for her only son?"

Deeply thinking, Wolfgang folded the letter again. He had known that his mother would lay no obstacle in his way. Now he could treat seriously with the director of the troupe. How high would he put the price of Wiarda's freedom? Certainly she was the star, the centre of attraction of the whole. Well, the morning's dawn would bring the answer, and wearied out, he sought his night's rest at last.

The next day, with music and singing the company entered the quiet valley, and pitched their tent in the village street. The director squatted, with high-raised knees, on a three-legged stool, and a box, grey with dust and dirt, served as a ticket office.

"A bad business, Bob Macky," he said, with a glance at a clown stretched out in the straw behind him.

"But Wiarda," with a click of his tongue, "she always draws."

"Stupid fellow!" sounded a peevish voice from a corner of the half-dark room, and an impetuous young figure came forward from the shadow. A pair of great, shimmering dark eyes shone from the small, pale, southern face down on the speaker. "There!" she said, snatching up a bunch of straw from the ground with her small brown hands and throwing it at his head, "A little refreshment!"

"Thank you, thank you, mademoiselle!" he said with mocking courtesy. "The present is certainly princely. Ah, who is coming?"

With a nimble spring he was at the box, ready to pocket a possible instalment on his backstanding pay.

"Tickets—first-class, two shillings; second-class, one shilling; third-class, sixpence; no standing room!" rattled off the director.

"I only wish to speak to you," returned the gentleman addressed. "Let me enter for a moment."

"Without permission, entrance is strictly forbidden," declared the clown. "You must take a ticket."

The intruder threw him a silver piece, which disappeared with astonishing quickness into his trousers' pocket.

"Ah, Herr Hermes! That is indeed Herr Hermes, who will take me away with him!" exclaimed Wiarda, rejoiced as she ran to the newcomer and offered him her hand.

"Who talks of taking you away? I think I have something to say about that!" interrupted the director, raising himself to his full height and frowning.

"Certainly you have. But you live in very unpleasant circumstances," said Wolfgang, thus opening a way for his proposition.

"Sir, we are artists!" stormed the director, turning an angry red.

"Would you like to go with me, Wiarda?" asked Wolfgang, filled with that deep interest which from the first had drawn him to the peculiar child.

"Yes!" she exclaimed with shining eyes. "I would like to travel. I would like to see lands and cities, and to learn to understand all that is great and beautiful."

"Let us try, Herr Director, to see if we can agree on this matter over a flask of good wine."

The director was no hater of good things, and when he returned with Wolfgang a few hours later, the latter had gained permission, with the aid of a hundred marks, to take Wiarda away with him.

* * * * *

"My dear child, are you still asleep?" said Frau Hermes, a few days later, as, with irreproachable cap on her silvery hair, she looked in the pleasant guest chamber which she had assigned to Wiarda the night before for a sleeping-room. "Early to bed and early to rise, you know, and your coffee is getting entirely cold."

Wiarda blinked sleepily at the speaker.

"Bob Macky always brought me my coffee in bed," she complained, while she took an India shawl from her trunk and wrapped herself up in it.

Her wealth of dark hair fell loosely down. She twined some strings of pearls through it, and remained

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standing before the great pier glass, which occupied half of the side of the room, as one lost in a dream, sunk in admiration of her own beauty.

"You look charming, Wiarda," said Wolfgang as she entered the dining-room and gave him a joyous good-morning.

"I do not think it suitable to deck yourself in the daytime with such theatrical gear," chided Frau Hermes.

"I have nothing else," said the girl, shrugging her shoulders.

"Then you should bind up your hair and leave off the pearls," was the reply.

"She is yet only a child, mother."

Wolfgang sought to appease his mother, while Wiarda hastily loosened the pearls from her hair and threw them to the ground, where they rolled noisily round her.

"There!" she cried, pale with excitement. "There! But I have no need to braid my hair and wear fashionable clothes that pinch me and take away my breath. I am a player's child, and you will make nothing else than I am out of me!"

Such scenes occurred frequently, and Wiarda grew to be a strange, reserved girl, with a look of longing ever in the great, shimmering eyes.

Gradually her outward appearance greatly changed under the pressure of Frau Hermes' will. In the long, dark dresses which were always fastened up to the throat, she appeared to the least advantage, and the hair, tightly plaited and smoothly parted on top, took from her face that charm that had been peculiar to it.

So with Wolfgang, whose eyes were always so susceptible to beauty, gradually the first warmer feeling faded away and left room for only a brotherly interest, while in Wiarda, the naturally impulsive and affectionate nature being repulsed, created in her character an underlying bitterness, which was increased by the lack of return which Wolfgang made to her adoring fondness of him.

Little by little a state of war grew up between her and Frau Hermes. Wiarda could not succeed in conducting everything with that painful regularity which Frau Hermes, accustomed to the severest order, wished. She could not comprehend that the weal or woe of a household depended upon the correct computing of the milk bill or the re-weighing of the meat and butter. All that meant nothing to her, so long as the breakfast table was decorated with fresh flowers and the evening board with lights.

Thus had a struggle arisen which, though carried on in silence, embittered both women, and left the stamp of discontent, making it impossible for them to lead a happy family life.

Frau Hermes hoped to aid matters by enlarging her little circle. She had a young friend, Magdalen Mertens, who, since the death of her mother, was comparatively alone. Frau Hermes thought that the maidenly charm and genuine womanliness of the girl would work with favourable influence on Wiarda, while her loving mother's heart predicted, when she thought of Wolfgang, a happy future for him with pretty Magdalen.

"You are going to have company," said Wolfgang one day to Wiarda.

She turned from the window.

"Indeed! Who is coming?" she asked, fixing her weary eyes on his handsome, open face.

"Magdalen Mertens, a very charming young lady."

He laughed a little and stroked his moustache.

Her eyes darkened.

"When will she arrive?"

"To-day, I think. She is an orphan, a distant relative of my mother, and is said to be very pretty."

"Oh, I can guess! Light, smooth hair, chubby face!"

She slurred over the words.

"Why, Wiarda—"

The girl pressed her brow against the cold pane and began softly to weep.

"What is the matter with you? Are you ill?" he asked, and drew her toward him and stroked the dark hair.

She clung to him a moment, clasping him with both arms, then tore herself away and flew from the room.

Magdalen arrived the same evening. She was a dainty little blonde, and had indeed the smooth hair, parted back from a rosy Madonna face. She breathed an atmosphere of peace and cheerfulness, and seemed a creature made to love and be loved.

With quiet pleasure Frau Hermes noted the deep impression that this lovely girl made on Wolfgang, who joined more and more in the family reunions and visits, during which he had formerly remained in his room, studying, if not claimed by his widening practice.

Only Wiarda maintained towards their guest a repellent demeanour. She was a quiet but close observer of the events about her, and as the intercourse between Magdalen and Wolf grew more intimate, as Magdalen won the undivided love of mother and son, Wiarda grew more gloomy and reserved, while at times a dangerous light glittered in her eyes.

Her passionate nature revolted at the restraint of good manners in which her foster-mother had so carefully instructed her, and at last there came an unrestrained outbreak of her violent disposition.

"I cannot endure you! What do you want of me?" she said angrily to Magdalen one day when the unsuspecting girl entered her room. "Go away! I do not want to see you! Go! Do you not hear? I hate you more than I can say!"

"Why, Wiarda!" said Magdalen, startled, and the swift blood flew to her face.

"Go away!" cried Wiarda, beside herself. "I shall go mad if you stay!"

Alarmed, Magdalen flew from the room, and in much distress entered the neighbouring one. There she paced restlessly up and down, and finally seated herself by the piano. Her hands wandered over the keys in a soft prelude, and she forgot the insult she had received in the sweet melody of song. She had still cause to be happy.

I cared not for power nor jewels,
Nor for that which with money is bought,
I longed for a heart full of love,
And in you I have found what I sought.

Lightly and tenderly sounded the soft tones of the girlish voice; the heavy portière which separated the room from the others of the suite was drawn aside by a man's hand. Wolfgang entered and stood by her side.

"Was that intended for me, Magdalen?" he asked softly, and looked passionately down at the blushing face. Then he seized her hands and discovered that she was trembling. "Magdalen," he exclaimed, "will you marry me and be a doctor's wife, my dear companion all the days that are left to us?"

She leaned her golden head on his shoulder, and her lovely face was transfigured with the light of love.

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"Yes," she said softly, and he drew her into his arms and kissed her.

Frau Hermes was overjoyed.

"We will celebrate their betrothal becomingly," she said, and ordered champagne to be placed on the table at evening.

"What is the matter?" asked Wiarda, suspiciously, when she saw the festive preparations.

"Why, do you not know?" Frau Hermes asked in surprise. "Wolfgang and Magdalen are betrothed."

Wiarda reeled and caught at a chair for support.

"Indeed!" she said, and grew a shade paler. Then while a mist swam before her eyes, "I congratulate them," she added hastily.

"Thanks," returned Frau Hermes, coldly, as she settled her new cap before the mirror. "It can be made public now."

The evening passed happily, and Wiarda's lack of interest in the proceedings was noticed by no one but Magdalen, who was reminded of the scene in the morning.

It might have been midnight. Magdalen lay wrapped in sweet slumber, when it seemed to her that her light curtains were parted, and she looked into a pale, agitated face, framed by a sweep of long dark hair, in which bright glass pearls shone as precious stones in the moonlight, while a pair of great, feverishly-glittering eyes, mysterious in their dark depths, were riveted on her—Wiarda's eyes.

Magdalen screamed and the figure withdrew, while a small object fell with a clinking sound to the floor.

A moment Magdalen saw her standing there in the full moonshine with a ghastly pale face, and in a strange, glittering dress hung with golden links and chains, then vanish silently from the room.

Was it only a shadow—a dream? She threw herself restlessly on her couch. Presently she heard the house door close. She arose and hastened to the window. She opened it, and the soft night breeze entered.

Below, on the street, all was still, but by the dim light of the lanterns she saw a shadow flit along the houses.

"Wiarda!" she called. "Wiarda!"

The name was lost in the wind, and, shivering, Magdalen closed the window.

"What can be keeping Wiarda?" asked Frau Hermes the following morning.

"Perhaps I only dreamed," said Magdalen, "but it seemed to me last night that I saw her standing before my bed with floating hair and bright pearls in it and shining eyes—and she must have dropped this."

Thereupon she drew forth a small, keen dagger and laid it upon the table. Horror-stricken, they gazed at it.

"I was so frightened," continued Magdalen, "when I awoke, that I screamed, and she drew back and left the room. A little later I heard the click of the house door."

"Your guardian angel has preserved you!" exclaimed Wolfgang, and he bent and kissed her. "She has gone to her own," he added, "she belonged to the world of glitter and spangles, and it was folly to tear her from it."

CATHERINE HUBBS.

His Little Girl Wife.

A HEAVENLY night. From the blue-black sky peeped the countless stars. The crescent moon hung in the eastern horizon, illuminating the tops of the buildings of the great city that frosty December night. Fleecy white clouds scudded across the vast expanse overhead, now obscuring a bright constellation, anon hurrying on—on, to break in mists upon other shores.

A small crowd of loiterers hung round the stage door of the Variety Theatre after the performance. At brief intervals dark figures emerged from the door into the street.

Among the loiterers was a young man, whose clear-cut classic features wore an anxious expression. His dark eyes were peering steadily in the direction of the stage door. He had a hunted look in the dim light from the dirty lamp.

Suddenly there rang out on the night air three sharp reports. A body fell at the door. The small crowd was doubled, trebled. Murdered!—shot through the heart!—the manager of the renowned circus troupe.

A month later the young man was on his trial for wilful murder. It was a case of circumstantial evidence. A revolver, a nickel-plated revolver, was found in his possession that night, a month before. Three chambers were loaded, three unloaded; but the revolver had not been discharged.

At the rear of the gallery, from the commencement of the trial there peeped out the anxious face of a beautiful girl, with golden hair and blue eyes. Her face was of a deathly pallor. It was said she fainted away when the revolver was produced in court.

On the third day a piercing shriek rent the crowded court as the foreman of the jury pronounced the words "Not guilty." The trial had been stopped. A man had given himself up as the actual murderer. He told his story in sobs. It was a sad story. Investigation bore out the man's statement in every detail.

Two years before—no, it was more than two, for it was in the mellow tints of a lovely autumn—two young lovers were in low conversation at the same stage door before the performance.

"From here we leave for Paris," said the orphan girl to her lover.

"You are going away for a long time, darling?"

"No, I believe not; not for long, Cyril. You know I shall write to you. I shall tell you where I am in every letter."

He squeezed her tiny hand.

"Ah, yes!" he faltered. "You will not forget now?"

She shook her head of golden locks. The blue eyes looked silently into his, then their lips met.

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That night they parted, "but only for a time," Winnie said to herself. They would meet ere long, and he—he would be able to keep a wife then. She would be his wife, this beautiful child acrobat.

Yes, they wrote to each other. She told him of the great Continental cities. She spoke of the beautiful sunsets, and orange groves, of purple and snow-capped mountains, and the blue skies—so blue!—of black, frowning chasms, rushing torrents, and great buildings reaching to a giddy height against the sky; she told him of fine gentlemen who wanted to make love to her, in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and all the places the troupe had visited—but she could never love them.

It was after many months he received the following, traced in her round, girlish hand:

"Our manager is very cruel. He does not give us sufficient food. He sometimes whips us with the lash to make us learn our tasks. Then we grow tired and weak. The other night I fell from the trapeze into the pit. All the people in the theatre stood up and cried out; but I wasn't hurt. I succeeded at last. The people clapped their hands, and shouted, 'Bravo, little one!' There's a beautiful girl in our troupe, with black hair and black eyes, and rosy cheeks. I think she is going to die. The manager has been, oh! so cruel to her for such a long time now. She coughs all day and all night long. She has become so thin. When she cannot do her task he whips her. I cried all night last night for her. I asked him to allow her to rest, and not take part in the performance. He would not listen to me. Poor Edith! she tries so hard to fight her dreadful cough. If I were a man I would shoot our manager. He smiles so kindly, and shakes hands with the people, but he is cruel to us. I am one of the stars now. With love and kisses. WINIFRED."

He prayed for her return; in vain he waited. Months passed—she, too, might be dead. Twelve months passed. By slow degrees he began to lose himself. The drink fiend overtook him; he lost his situation; he was on the verge of starvation. He rented a garret in the poor part of the city; then to eke out his wretched existence he took to writing little things for the papers.

"Winnie! Winnie!" he cried out often in the dead of night, hesitating between drink or work to drown thought. He could see her face again; he could hear her sweet voice, ere she left him. "Yes; for thee, for thee, I will!" he cried out.

A few months subsequently a story flashed upon the world like a meteor from the sky. The public clamoured on all sides for the anonymous author. He woke to find himself famous.

But he was not happy. She could not share his good fortune. All the fame of the world could not equal her love.

One day his attention was arrested by a startling poster in huge black letters on a yellow ground, thus:

"Return visit of the famous Bertini acrobatic troupe, after glorious successes in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, etc., etc. For six nights only. Extraordinary attractions, etc., etc., etc."

As he read his eyes seemed to become riveted to that poster. Then, after a while, he walked away in a reverie.

* * * * * *

"The best made to-day, sir," said the gunsmith. "Suicide?" elevating his eyebrows and smiling in an insinuating manner.

The other was examining a revolver, carefully inspecting the working parts. As he turned it about he could see his face in it. Shadows danced from it like a toy looking-glass.

He coolly shook his head, and, without exchanging many words, left the shop.

* * * * *

He lit a cigar, and, buttoning up his overcoat, stepped out into the frosty air. He walked steadily in the direction of the theatre. Nearing his destination, he stopped under a lamp to look at his watch. Yes, it was near the hour. He would beguile the time by walking about—close to that door.

It was a terrible time. Keen as was the air, great beads of perspiration fell from his face. He watched the forms that left the door, ever and anon fumbling beneath his coat. He listened to the monotonous tramp, tramp of his own footsteps Once, in a momentary fever of excitement, he brushed aside two or three from among the knot of loiterers, as a figure emerged from the door, fearful of missing his man.

A man's figure descended the few steps. Beneath the partially-buttoned coat could be seen a spangled breast on a flesh-coloured garment. Cyril produced his instrument of death.

"Great heaven, what is that?" he gasped.

One, two, three flashes, three loud reports, and the man with the spangled breast fell dead on his face at Cyril's feet!

That was how the murder was done.

* * * * *

"Thank heaven, not guilty!" said Winnie in a caressing tone. "And you believed me dead, Cyril?"

"Yes, darling. I thought you were not telling me all."

"I did suffer, Cyril. He stopped our writing home. He cut off all communication with friends or relatives."

The young author and his little girl-wife were sitting in the twilight by the fireside in their pretty home. Fantastic shadows danced on the walls from the fitful flames. Out beyond the window and the long garden were the purple hills and endless groves of oak and elm in deep perspective.

In his hand he held a sheet of paper. This is what was written on that paper:

"You were wrongly accused. Forgive me. He murdered my child, my only child—all that was dearest in the world to me, a lonely widower. Oh, how I had longed for her to be home again! But she came back to die. She was murdered, sir; murdered by him. How I remember her going away! Heaven bless her! And we were to be so happy when she came home. I have worked hard, living for her; living, as you would, in the fond hope of having her with me once more. Two loving notes she sent me. But one day a letter came in another handwriting, telling me my child was dying—dying, sir! I would not believe it. She had said nothing. But she wrote no more to me. I wrote again and again. Oh, what days of bitter anguish! What suspense I suffered—waiting, waiting for the truth I hoped to learn, which never came! But, by heaven, it came at last! She came, she and Death. So the Great Reaper took my Edith—my only child.

"You will forgive me, won't you, sir? Now I have to suffer—but not for murder. The jury reduced it to manslaughter. The judge said, as I in my heart have said, his was a greater crime than mine. Twelve months' imprisonment! I shall never look up again, sir; but I shall see my child once more. Farewell!"

GERALD DONALDSON.

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THE FIRM OF ARMITAGE AND BROWNE.

I HAD been called to the bar not quite a year, and was seated with my friend Frank Armitage in our chambers in the Temple. Frank had been called on the same day as myself, and we had agreed to make our professional start together.

To that end we had become joint possessors of a set of chambers at No. 99, Fig-tree Court, and of a boy named Blobbs, who was known as our 'clerk," though his tender years and seedy garments made the dignified appellation sound almost ironical. His style of dress was peculiar, and gave one the idea that he had several brothers of various sizes, and had borrowed an article of apparel from each—his boots belonging to the eldest, and his trousers to the youngest.

There were sundry other boys on our staircase, with whom Blobbs was constantly having little differences, and fighting them out upon the landing; indeed this, with occasional expeditions to the chemist's for commissariat purposes, formed the staple of his professional occupations.

When he first undertook his duties, we had started him with a pint bottle of ink, a ream of draft paper, and a gross of pens; and we had enjoined him to employ all his leisure time in copying precedents. He began with great vigour, and copied about a page and a half, in a large schoolboy hand, the first morning, but he never got any farther. The ream of paper dwindled somehow, and the ink disappeared to an extent which even the numerous little black devils, with which Blobbs had embellished his domain, failed to account for, until one morning I detected him in the act of blacking his boots with it, and polishing them with the pen-wiper.

Still, as boys go, Blobbs was not a very bad specimen; and as we really had no work for him to do, we were not disposed to be extremely angry with him for not doing it. Fortunately, Armitage and myself were both to a considerable extent independent of our profession, for, to all appearance, our profession was quite independent of us.

We had been called, as I have mentioned, very nearly a year, and neither of us had yet been favoured with a brief, nor did there appear to be any particular likelihood that we ever should.

We had a friend, Charlie Larcombe, who had recently been articled to a solicitor, and who had promised that when he was out of his articles (which would be in about four years), and had passed his examination (which might be forty), he would "give us a lift."

This rather vague prospect really appeared to be our only chance; but, with the natural sanguineness of youth, we still looked for briefs, though we had not the faintest notion where they were to come from. In truth, in the very early days of our professional career (when we had only been barristers for a week or two) we used to watch with anxious solicitude any person of legal aspect who was seen to cross the court in the direction of our staircase; but we found that the persons of legal aspect invariably stopped short at the chambers of Cocksure, Q.C., which were immediately below ours, and the approach of a stranger had now ceased to excite more than a casual interest. Our personal habits, too, had degenerated.

At the outset of our career we had unanimously agreed that everything of an unprofessional character in our belongings should be rigidly tabooed. In particular we had decided that our breakfast should always be over, and its remains cleared away, before nine a.m. and that the smoking should not on any account be permitted in the room destined for the reception of clients.

In accordance with these virtuous resolves, we were (or I rather should say we had been) always to be found by half-past nine, each seated in the rigidest of armchairs, wearing the blackest of frock coats and the stiffest of shirt collars, attentively perusing ponderous law books, and making copious notes with the assistance of a gigantic pewter inkstand, polished to a positively dazzling brightness.

But this halcyon state of affairs was too good to last. We had screwed up our virtuous resolves to too extreme a tension, and they had gradually sunk down again. Who was the first to give way is a moot point. My own idea is that all would have gone well had not Armitage insidiously suggested our allowing ourselves just one cigarette after breakfast; while he will have it that the thin end of the wedge was introduced by my surreptitiously reading an occasional French novel under cover of Coke on Littleton. However this may be, we had speedily fallen away from our original high standard.

Not having been troubled with that frantic rush of clients which we had originally expected, we had become much less particular in our habits. The large

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law-books were left unopened, the hour of breakfast had become gradually later and later, and short pipes and tweed jackets had become the order of the day until luncheon, and sometimes, I fear, even till dinner-time.

In our earlier days, we had made it a point of honour that one or other of us should always remain in chambers, so as to be ready for anything that might turn up; but now we made nothing of putting up the delusive notice: "Return in five minutes," and departing together for the rest of the day.

In order, however, to keep up the pleasant fiction that we still expected to have clients some day, we had made a bet. Each of us had backed himself for five pounds to get the first brief, with the proviso that (if ever the bet should be decided) the winner was to stand a dinner to the loser, in order to commemorate the event.

Imagine our condition, therefore, when, on the morning of my story, soon after ten, a heavy step was heard to ascend the staircase and pause at our door, and when Blobbs (who had been, according to his usual habit, settling a little difficulty with Cocksure's boy upon the landing) rushed in, and, in a hoarse whisper, said, frantic with excitement:

"A gentleman for Mister Browne! And he've got a bundle of papers."

I must say that Armitage's behaviour did him credit. My landing the first prize must naturally have been a disappointment to him, but in the most magnanimous way he exclaimed:

"Good for you, old man! Go in and win. I'll hook it into the next room, and leave the coast clear for you."

And he bolted accordingly into his bedroom. I would have given much to have been able to assume a more dignified attire and to straighten things generally before the entrance of my client, but it was out of the question. I had only just time to pitch the end of my cigar into the fire, open one of the big law books (upside down, as I afterwards discovered), and to compose my features into the most professional expression compatible with a flannel jacket and carpet slippers, when the visitor entered.

He was a short, puffy little man, middle-aged, and of a good-naturedly unintellectual cast of countenance. He wore a shabby white hat and greasy black gloves, and his trousers were shorter and his umbrella fatter than is generally considered desirable in those articles; but notwithstanding, there was an air of smug respectability about him, and the bundle of papers, tied with red tape, which he carried, had an eminently business-like appearance. He began:

"I must apologise for disturbing you at this hearly hour, Mr. Browne" (he was evidently not a high-class practitioner); "but the fact is, I have come to beg your assistance in a very urgent case."

I tried to look as if very urgent cases were matters of the most ordinary occurrence in my professional experience.

"Ah," I said, "quite so. Take a seat, Mr. ——"

"Ward, sir; Gibbins and Ward, of High Street, Bloomsbury. You have heard the name, I dare say. Gibbins is dead—has been dead some years, in fact; but we keep up the old name, you know."

I didn't know in the least. I had never to my knowledge heard of Gibbins and Ward, but it would not do to admit the fact. Not to know Gibbons and Ward would clearly be to argue myself unknown. I took my cue accordingly.

"Oh, yes; Gibbins and Ward, a most eminent firm! I am delighted to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Mr. Ward."

"You are very kind, sir. Well, sir, as I was saying, or rather as I was about to say, I have become connected with a case—a very peculiar case, indeed—a most peculiar case—and, hearing of you from my old friend Mr. Wiggins, I thought that, though I am a stranger to you myself, I might venture to call and ask you to assist me in it."

"Dear me," I thought, "whoever would have thought of old Wiggins (my hairdresser) sending me a client!" And, on the principle that one good turn deserves another, I mentally resolved to go and get my hair cut the very next day. I replied: "I shall be very happy, Mr. Ward. Have you the particulars in writing?"

"Well, not exactly," said Mr. Ward, depositing his bundle of papers in his hat. "I have a few rough memoranda; but I'll tell you in half-a-dozen words the state of the case. The party I represent is a Mrs. Podgers; and I think you'll agree with me that she has been very badly used. The fact is, she was the daughter of an old fellow named Glubb, in the oil and colour trade, a man reputed to be worth a mint of money. When she married Podgers, who was a pork butcher in a small way of business, Podgers naturally wanted to know what the old man would do for them. A little ready money would have been very acceptable; and as they knew that Susan (that's Mrs. Podgers) was the only daughter, and would come in for all the old man's money at his death, they didn't see why he shouldn't give 'em a little at once, on account like. But old Glubb wasn't to be had in that way.

"'No,' he says, 'if you marry Susan, when I die you'll have all I've got, which may be ten thousand, or it may be twenty; but I'm not a-going to undress before I go to bed, as the saying is!'

"So upon that, and quite relying that the old man would keep his word, Podgers goes and marries. They all knew the old man couldn't last very long, so on the strength of his expectations, Podgers puts in a new shop window and starts a pony-trap. Trade was bad, and Podgers found himself outrunning the constable a bit, but he did not mind, feeling sure it would be all right when the old man went off the hooks."

I began to see my way. Podgers had married on the strength of the old gentleman's promise, and the old gentleman had subsequently changed his mind. Here was an opportunity of pressing Mr. Ward with my acumen.

"Excuse my interrupting you one moment, Mr. Ward," and I rang the bell. Blobbs entered. "Blobbs, give me 'Chitty on Contracts,' and then go and ask Mr. Cocksure's clerk to oblige me with the loan of the sixth volume of 'Meeson and Welsby,' I think I can give you a case just in point, Mr. Ward."

Blobbs handed me "Chitty on Contracts," which, in point of fact, was on the mantelpiece immediately behind me, and departed to execute the remainder of my order. I referred to the index, murmuring audibly, "Consideration—good—valuable—marriage—page 18." Then turned to the passage and silently perused it with much attention. "Ah, yes, I thought so!"

Blobbs here returned with the borrowed volume, in which, with an air of deep reflection, I turned to an imaginary authority.

"No, that won't do. I had forgotten for the moment that that case was overruled by Jones v Robinson. Pray proceed, Mr. Ward."

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Mr. Ward had more than once attempted to continue his story, but with a gentle wave of the hand I had courteously yet firmly deprecated interruption. He resumed apologetically:

"I'm afraid I'm giving you a deal of trouble, Mr. Browne."

"Not at all, Mr. Ward, I assure you. I always like to make sure, from the outset, as to the broad principles applicable."

"Quite so, sir; very true. But I am afraid there is a little misunderstanding."

"I think not. I have followed you with great attention. A. marries B.'s daughter, C., on the faith of an undertaking by B. that he will, on his death, leave C. the whole of his property; B. (that's Glubb, you know) dies, and he doesn't leave the property to C. (that's Mrs. Podgers), but to somebody else. Isn't that your case?" And I leant back in my chair and eyed him with a deny-that-if-you-can sort of expression.

"Just exactly so, sir. If you'd been one of the family yourself you couldn't have got it more pat. They all went on as comfortably as possible till one Sunday the old gentleman dined with the Podgerses, and he found a caterpillar in the vegetables. He would have it they did it on purpose. He went home at once, tore up his will, and made another, leaving every penny of his money to the Asylum for Incurable Clearstarchers. The excitement brought on an apoplectic fit, and he died the very same night. Personalty sworn under £25,000; and Podgers all but in the *Gazette*."

I began to fear that the case would be a Chancery matter, and that my share in it would be limited to giving Mr. Ward an elaborate opinion to that effect. But it clearly would not do to make any suggestion of the kind at the present stage of the proceedings.

"Ah, just as I thought, you see." I tried to look as if I had anticipated every detail of the case, even to the caterpillar.

"Well, now, the question is—What evidence have we, first, of a distinct agreement on the part of B. (otherwise Glubb) to leave all his property to his daughter; and, secondly, that A. (otherwise Podgers) married on the faith of that promise? You hear what Chitty says: 'A valuable consideration is such as money, marriage, or the like which the law esteems an equivalent given for the grant, and is therefore founded on motives of justice.' That's the law; but how about the facts? Mere assertion won't do, you know; we must have evidence."

"Well, as to evidence, I'm afraid there isn't much in a legal sense. Mr. Cocksure has advised upon the case, and he says that we haven't any evidence; in fact, that we haven't a leg to stand upon."

It was flattering, and at the same time a little alarming, to be consulted in a case in which Mr. Cocksure had already expressed an adverse opinion. If Mr. Cocksure was timid, I had better be at least cautious.

"You will have uphill work before you I'm afraid; and I should recommend you, Mr. Ward, as a man of business (this is, of course, between ourselves), to see your way very clear as to your costs out of pocket. The Incurable Clearstarchers will fight hard, sir, you may depend on it."

"O, dear; yes, sir; no doubt they would. But we've quite made up our minds not to go to law about the matter. It would only be throwing good money after bad; leastways, it would if we had any to throw; but we haven't. Podgers ran away to America last Monday; and his poor wife and five young children are this moment living in a two-pair back in Camden Town, sustaining a miserable existence on the scanty remains of the stock-in-trade."

A horrible misgiving crossed my mind, and I shut up Chitty. "I thought—I mean to say I supposed—I really don't see quite, then, in what way I can be of service in the case, Mr. Ward."

"Well, you see, sir, Mr. Wiggins told me as you was an uncommon kind-hearted gentleman, so I made bold to call and ask if you wouldn't put down your name for a trifle for the widow and orphans—not that Mrs. P—— is precisely a widow, nor yet the children orphans, but rather worse, if anything, in my opinion, and another expected almost immediately, sir."

I was fairly caught. Not for worlds would I have let Mr. Ward know that I had been labouring under a misapprehension, and had been mentally welcoming him as my first client. On the other hand, after the extreme interest I had exhibited in the case, I could not do less than give him a handsome donation. Smiling amiably, but inwardly breathing the most awful imprecations against Wiggins (and very nearly vowing, on the spur of the moment, never to have my hair cut again as long as I lived), I expressed my extreme gratification at having the opportunity of contributing a sovereign to the necessities of the Podgers family.

Mr. Ward beamed with delight, and pressed on my acceptance his card, assuring me that "if I should at any time require anything in his line, it would be his most earnest endeavour"—these words, by-the-way, he apparently spelt with an h—"to give me satisfaction." He insisted on shaking hands at parting, and appeared to find considerable difficulty in tearing himself away. At last, however, he departed, leaving me still holding his card, whereon I read:

"Gibbins and Ward, Greengrocer, 195 High Street, Bloomsbury. Evening parties attended."

My one absorbing thought, as soon as I could think at all, was how on earth to conceal the facts from Armitage; what possible fiction to invent which should save my dignity from the exposure of the horrible truth.

What dreadful falsehood I might ultimately have given birth to I cannot say, for I was saved from the ordeal by hearing a burst—or, rather, a succession of bursts—of frantic laughter from the room to which Armitage had retired. I pushed the door, which yielded to my touch.

My worst fears were realised! He knew all. He was lying upon the bed, his feet considerably above his head, cramming a pocket-handkerchief into his mouth, and every now and then breaking out afresh into a peal of maniac laughter.

"Well, Browne, old boy, I hope you've given the new client a good sound legal opinion. Oh, dear, my poor sides. Where shall we have the dinner, eh, old man?"

"Come, Frank," I said, addressing him more in sorrow than in anger, "don't add insult to injury. You've had the door ajar, you scoundrel, so I need not tell you any particulars. But, at any rate, promise me to keep the secret."

"That I'll be hanged if I do, old boy; the joke is a great deal too good to keep to myself. How about 'Chitty on Contracts' and of 'Meeson and Welsby?' Oh, you old imposter! I'll be hanged if I don't tell the story to every fellow I meet."

So, for fear that the facts should be misrepresented—I hate misrepresentation—I determined to tell it myself.

Harry London.

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. . . RESULT OF THE . . .

£1,000 BIRTHS AND DEATHS COMPETITION.

TWO WINNERS GET £500 EACH.

THE Registrar-General's returns for the week ending April 22nd, 1899, state the number of births during that week in the thirty-three large towns in England and Wales as **7,297**, and deaths **3,993**.

Two competitors gave a correct forecast of both totals. The £1,000 has, therefore, been divided between them, according to the conditions of the competition, and a cheque for £500 has been forwarded to each person. Their names and addresses are:

MR. JOHN R. LLOYD,
13 Saxony Road,
Kensington,
and Liverpool.

MR. J. G. MALE,
4a Rose Mount,
Oxton,
Birkenhead.

The witnesses who signed Mr. Lloyd's coupon are:

THOMAS LLOYD, 43 Farnworth Street, Liverpool.
WILLIAM ORTON, 5 Saxony Road, Liverpool.
LOUIE ORTON, " " "
ANNIE ORTON, " " "
ALFRED ORTON, " " "

The copy of *Home Notes* from which the winning coupon was taken was purchased from

T. CORLETT, 82 Crown Street, Liverpool.

Mr. Male's coupon was signed by:

GEORGE MALE, Fairclough Lane, Oxton, Birkenhead.
RICHARD GILLIES, 4 Fountain Street, Tranmere, Birkenhead.
CHARLES H. JONES, 18 Cardigan Street, Birkenhead,
HENRY SALE, 10 Larch Road, Birkenhead.
EDWARD DELF, 28 Fountain Street, Tranmere, Birkenhead.

The newsagent who sold *Short Stories* containing the winning coupon is

Mrs. TYSON, Rose Mount, Oxton, Birkenhead.

To each of the witnesses we have sent a cheque for £5, and to each of the newsagents a cheque for £12 10s., in accordance with the original announcement.

It will no doubt be interesting to competitors to know that one person gave a correct forecast of the deaths total, and was only one unit out in the births.

Eight competitors were one out in each total; three competitors were correct in one total, and two out in the other total; whilst an enormous number succeeded in giving one correct total in either case.

Immediately the result of the competition was known we forwarded the two cheques for £500 each to the winners, and have received their receipts for the money. We are, therefore, in a position to publish these below:

13 Saxony Road,
Kensington,
Liverpool.
May 9, 1899.

Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*.

DEAR SIR.—Your letter to hand this morning inclosing cheque for £500, for which I beg to thank you most heartily. At the same time I must express my appreciation for the prompt manner in which you have conducted this matter. I may say that it has come to me at a time when I shall feel the benefit of it. I am afraid I cannot find words to express fully my feelings at this moment, but in conclusion I must once more thank you for my good fortune.

Believe me,
Yours very faithfully,
JOHN R. LLOYD.

Received from the proprietors of *Pearson's Weekly*, *Home Notes*, and *Short Stories*, the sum of £500 (five hundred pounds), being one-half of the total prize of £1,000 offered in the recent Births and Deaths Competition.

(Signed) JOHN R. LLOYD,
13 Saxony Road,
Liverpool.

9th May, 1899.

4A Rose Mount, Oxton, 9th May, 1899.

Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson Limited.

GENTLEMEN,—Your favour of 8th inst. duly received, and I can assure you that I am most agreeably surprised. It gives me great pleasure to inclose receipt, and also to thank you for your kind congratulations.

I very much admire the business way you have carried out the competition, and I may add that I will do all in my power to forward the interest of your publications.

I am, Gentlemen,
Yours very sincerely,
J. G. MALE.

Received from the proprietors of *Pearson's Weekly*, *Home Notes*, and *Short Stories* the sum of Five Hundred Pounds (£500), being one-half of the total prize of £1,000 offered in the recent Births and Deaths Competition.

(Signed) J. G. MALE,
4A Rose Mount,
Oxton,
Birkenhead.

9th May, 1899.

CONSOLATION PRIZES.

To each of the competitors who were only a figure or two out, and had the hard luck to miss a portion of the grand distribution, we have forwarded a cheque as a consolation prize, though we are not liable to do so in accordance with the announcements of the competition. Their names and addresses are:

Emily Rither, Grove Lodge, Sawbridgeworth, Herts; George Clews, 3 The Avenue, Herne Bay; Arthur Wooler, 21 Joseph Street, Shipley, Yorks; Thos. Philips, 6 High Street, Dorking; Horatio T. Davis, 147 Main Street, Bulwell, Nottingham; Benjamin Parker, Broadlands, Oulton Road, Lowestoft; Jonathan Mason, 60 Healy Wood Road, Burnley; J. Webb, 13 Clarendon Street, Hull; Thomas Dick, 10 Low Barholm, Kilbarchan, N. B.; L. Crawley, Frankfort House, Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, S.E.; Ernest A. Jewell, 2 Bedford Place, Plymouth; James Hamilton, 50 Great Hamilton Street, Glasgow.

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One Thousand Pounds for You

£100 FOR A NEWSAGENT OR BOOKSTALL CLERK. £5 FOR EACH OF THE BOOKSTALL BOYS.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in England and Wales for the week ending July 1st, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk from whom you obtained this copy of "S.S." to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Newsagents and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£100,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £100 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, and the £5 for bookstall boys.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in England and Wales for the corresponding period during the past three years.

The figures published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending July 4th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending July 3rd, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending July 2nd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,872	3,691	7,115	3,106	6,575	3,203

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

This Competition closes on Wednesday, June 28th.

S. S.

My estimate is - { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

.....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," AND "PASTIMES."

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THE PANG OF DEATH.

THE model was tired, for the pose was a most fatiguing one. But this was the last hour of the last day, and he had had double pay throughout the engagement. He was a tall, athletic fellow with a handsome, sensuous face now somewhat wan and refined from fatigue, for he was bound nude to one of the wooden posts supporting the roof—his ankles crossed and tied with cords of twisted grass, his arms, slightly bent, uplifted on either side of his head the wrist secured with strong wisps.

Arrows and darts were thrust into the wood about his head, neck and trunk, and a pile of brushwood was disposed around his lower limbs; for the dark, slight young man who was painting rapidly but surely at the canvas on the rough-hewn easel, had employed him to pose as a victim of Indian torture.

The scantily furnished cottage was situated in an isolated and picturesque dell on a bank of the Thames, some distance from Reading, and the artist, having found it entirely to his mind, had purchased it at a very reasonable rate from the late owner, who had reasons for departing to a region even more remote at as early a date as possible.

Kennedy, as the artist was called, had sought a long time for a model to his mind, however; but fortune had thrown in his way this man, an Italian whom he had unearthed in London and persuaded to visit the cottage daily—the persuasion having taken the form of double fees, all expenses and unlimited drink.

The picture was practically finished, save that the face was curiously expressionless and incomplete, although the likeness was perfect.

"So we part to-day, Carlo," said Kennedy. "I suppose you will be glad to find an easier job?"

The Italian smiled deprecatingly, but did not answer.

"Going back to your own country, eh, Carlo?" continued Kennedy. "Got a dark-eyed, olive-cheeked signora waiting for you. I'll be bound."

The Italian leered like a satyr, but replied: "Signor, no."

"Let's see, you're from Florence, I think you said; how long is it since you left?"

"Signor, eleven years."

"So long? Were you ever at Siena?"

"Signor, no," replied the Italian, with a quick, apprehensive look.

"Indeed? Well, perhaps you have heard of a love tragedy which occurred there about eleven years ago. A friend of mine was mixed up in it, but the assassin was never discovered. My friend's name was Chester. He was a fair-haired, fair-bearded Englishman travelling in Tuscany, and was happy enough to win the love of a beautiful girl named Teresa Peri. But she had a suitor among her own people, one Fileppo Currini, a handsome fellow, I believe, but evil and dissolute beyond redemption. The girl disliked him and spurned his every advance with loathing. Did you speak, Carlo?"

"Signor, no; I sigh—the day is long."

"Ah, well, you will soon be freed from your bonds, my Carlo. But to continue; Fileppo became madly jealous of this fair Englishman, whom he had heard of but never seen, and he surprised Teresa on her way to the trysting place to plead with her again, or threaten, perhaps. Anyhow, he overtook her before she met her lover, and, meeting with repulse and disdain doubtless, thrust his stiletto through her slender throat and fled like the cur he was, not daring to wait for the Englishman, who arrived to find his sweetheart in the death pang. The assassin fled to the mountains bordering the Maremma, it was said. Broken-hearted, the Englishman left the neighbourhood to search for the murderer, folks believed, and wandered the world over for years, carrying with him one souvenir of the cowardly crime—the deadly stiletto, which the criminal in his haste had not plucked from the wound. Look at it, Carlo."

He took from his pocket the weapon of which he spoke and advanced to the bound man, swinging it lightly in his hand. Great beads of perspiration rolled down the Italian's face, his eyes became awfully prominent and his lips twitched convulsively as he stammered, "Signor, the cord cuts."

"I am sorry to say that you must endure it for a few more minutes, Carlo—I beg your pardon, Fileppo. Now look steadily and know me at the last, for I am the Englishman, shaven and dyed to track you secretly and surely, so that you may die the death of the beautiful girl you slew—die with your own stiletto through your throat, while I paint your last agony, so that I may have it ever before my eyes."

The wretched creature whom he addressed struggled with the bonds until the cords incised the flesh, while he pleaded piteously for mercy in a jargon of tongues to which the other turned a deaf ear.

"My plans are well arranged, Fileppo," continued the artist mockingly. "I shall cut the canvas across, and take it away in that light case, so as to escape remark; it can be pieced again, my friend. The other furniture, easel, chairs and so on, will help to make up your funeral pyre. I don't think a little smoke will be noticed in this neighbourhood; if it is, I shall be far away—and you, too. Now for the death pang. Fileppo! Die remembering the murdered Teresa and her avenger. Die, you dog!"

He thrust the stiletto through the wretch's throat with the last word, strode back to the easel and painted the dying man's agonies with feverish rapidity but wonderful skill. The last choking breath left the throat, and the eyelids dropped over the glazing eyes as the finishing touch was put to the face now marvellously and horribly expressive in its ghastly realism.

"Got it!" said the artist, with a loud mirthless laugh and the light of madness now bright in his eyes Then he slit the canvas and frame across, placed the halves in the case, carefully retaining them apart with little clamps to prevent rubbing.

Next he broke the easel and chairs and cast them piece by piece upon the brushwood, lighted a match and set the pile alight. With another mirthless laugh he picked up the case containing the canvas, and, with a look of maniacal hate at the corpse, passed without, locked the door and withdrew the key.

Approaching the river, he flung the key far into the water, and turning again, made his way along a by-path, bearing with him into the unknown future the terrible picture of the death pang.

VICTOR NELSON.

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WAS IT MADNESS?

"My dear, if you will keep the children quiet I will try to take a nap before I go to the bank. My head aches cruelly. Wake me in half an hour."

It was a costly house in which Mr. Steadman, the great banker, lived, and it was in the most luxurious of easy chairs in his handsome library that he now sought repose. A loving and sympathetic wife adjusted the curtains to soften the light for the suffering man, and then, with her firm, soft hands she tenderly pressed and stroked his throbbing temples. Dwelling in an atmosphere of unbounded love, surrounded with every comfort that wealth could supply, he gradually lost all consciousness in profoundest slumber.

* * * * *

Horrible visions, so unreal and yet so vivid, flit through Charles Steadman's brain. Hard, stern faces are about him; restraining walls, and iron pallet!

At times a spirit of rage comes over him—a blind, unreasoning, overwhelming rage. It fills his veins with running fire. He feels a mighty strength through every nerve and fibre of his being and longs to grapple the throats of the bright-eyed demons who stare at him through the grated door of his imprisoning cell.

Hands reach out and clutch him, and when he fiercely struggles to be free they thrust him into a padded cage, scarce larger than a coffin, in which he cannot stand—he cannot rise—like a curtain of death it enshrouds him. Choking, suffocated, he dashes his fists, his feet, his head against the yielding sides; then comes oblivion, now complete, now partial, through which his suffering consciousness is charged with constant horror, and through which vibrate piercing, inhuman cries and awful laughter!

At times a softer mood comes over him. He calls for wife and children; to his eager inquiries for those he loves, false hypocritical answers are returned. But the dear ones never come, never come! Ah, now, happy relief, at length he awakens. What a frightful dream!

"Mary," he cries; "Mary."

But there is no answering touch, no answering voice!

Is he not then awake? Surely he is. His pulse beats calmly; his eyes are open; he feels that he has his full understanding.

Yet this is not his chair! Those walls, that window, they are not in his house. The floor is hard beneath his feet. Where are the thick rugs, the decorated walls, the rich draperies of his library? And, above all, where are the gentle hands and voice of Mary?

"Upon my word, doctor, this is amazing! I believe he is himself. Look at his eyes."

"Incredible! He is an incurable!"

"But look at the expression of his eyes! I tell you, this man is sane."

"Of course I am sane," says Steadman, "and what do you mean by this talk? Why am I not at home? And how do I come here?"

Now he sees that he is in a small room, sitting in an iron chair, which is fastened to the floor.

Startled, his eyes eagerly take in his surroundings—cold, grey walls—a little window protected by iron bars—a door with iron grating—a narrow iron bed covered with a neat, white counterpane; all so strange, and yet so strangely, strangely familiar!

A quiet, elderly man, dressed in a long black frock coat, stands before him, and by that man's side is another who stoops and peers intently into Steadman's puzzled, frightened face.

"What does this mean, gentlemen? What crime have I committed in my sleep that I am in prison? What will my wife think?" And he endeavours to rise from his chair.

"I am very glad, Mr. Steadman," says the man in black, placing a restraining hand upon his shoulder, "to hear you ask these questions. You have been very ill, but now you shall go home. Your wife will be a happy woman to hear of your recovery."

"But, doctor, if you are a doctor, why should I have been removed from home if I were ill? Surely home is the best place for a sick man, and my wife is the best of nurses. This is an outrage, and I'll teach you scoundrels that such things cannot be done with impunity."

He feels that old mad fury coming upon him. He dashes aside the doctor's hand, springs to his feet, and hurls himself at the iron-grated door. In an instant four hands seize him, well he remembers that hated touch—there comes the sound of hurrying feet, the door is opened, and in rush two attendants. Despite his frantic efforts, handcuffs are snapped upon his wrists, and brawny arms hold him panting and struggling down upon the iron cot. Oh, what does this mean? Those fearful visions, those dreams of mad struggles, of stern faces, of resistless coercion, of prison surroundings, flash through his mind. Were those dreams? Surely this is reality. And if this is reality were not those things real? Is he mad? Yet not now, if then; for lying there helpless as a child in the grasp of those terrible men his reason assures him that he no longer dreams.

"Doctor," he says pleadingly, "release me. I will be calm. I will injure no one. Surely you do not wish to cause me unnecessary suffering."

"Release him," said the doctor, "and leave the room."

They do so and he rises to his feet.

"Doctor, however things have been I am well now. I wish to go home. Will you permit me to do so? If you will, I will pardon all that's past. Only let me go to my wife."

"You shall," returned the doctor, "immediately. Be calm and patient and I will procure a conveyance as quickly as I can and you shall be with your wife within an hour."

The doctor leaves the cell, but fastens the door behind him, and Steadman faint and sick, sinks back into the iron chair and seeks to collect his thoughts.

It was but an hour ago that the sound of children's voices was stilled that he might sleep away his headache in the library at home. He can hear the echo of his wife's gentle "hush," causing his little Edith and his little Ned to stop their noisy play. He can feel the dear wife's breath and the slow stroke upon his forehead which carried him into dreamland. But what then? Nothing.

Is this dreamland? No, it is too frightfully real. He can hear—and see—and think—and remember. How clearly he can recall every incident of this eventful day! He had not been well for some time. His wife had been very anxious about him. Yielding to her persuasion, he had that morning consulted his family

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physician concerning himself. He can remember every word of the good man's advice,

"Too much worry; too much application to business; nervous breakdown threatened; must leave work and get away."

And he had answered:

"How could he, the manager and principal stockholder of a great bank and a director and official in a host of business enterprises which demanded his personal supervision? He was rich, yet there were liabilities which he alone knew how to turn from disaster into great profits. He could not stop, he must work a while longer—just a little while, and then he would take his wife and children abroad and have a happy year and regain his former health and vigour."

But the doctor has shaken his head and said:

"Mr. Steadman, you are in a serious condition, more serious than I would care to mention did I not know that, unless you are reasonably alarmed, you will not follow my directions."

And he had promised to think it over and had gone home to luncheon and his hour's rest in the peace and quiet of that dear abode.

* * * * *

But here comes the doctor and he will soon be with Mary and the children again and know all; for she will tell him why he was carried, in his sleep, to this dreadful place. It was no lack of love which sent him there—he knows that well, if it was done with her consent.

The cab stops in a part of the city where Steadman has never been before, in front of a plain, unpretending house. The cabman opens the door and the doctor alights.

"Oh! doctor, I beg of you not to spend time to make a call. Get me home! Get me home!"

"Come, Mr. Steadman, you will find her here."

"Find my wife here? Impossible! This is not my house. Driver, take me to Park Place. If you must stop, doctor, I will go on. You can follow at your leisure. Do you hear me, driver? Move on and don't spare your horses."

"But, Mr. Steadman, I tell you your wife is in this house. I will explain later."

Steadman springs from the carriage and hurries up the steps to the house. The doctor can hardly keep pace with him. He rings the bell, and to the maid says:

"Is Mrs. Steadman here? Say her husband wishes to see her."

There are running footsteps in the upper hall—a familiar form glides down the stairway, a moment's hesitation, a glad cry, and he is clasped in his dear wife's loving arms. She leads him into the little sitting-room, makes him sit down, and then caresses and comforts him as does a mother the child who was lost and is found again.

His eyes overflow with tears at this great tenderness—but what is this? the light maybe, perhaps the tears. It cannot be; but yes, the bright, brown hair is thickly streaked with grey!

"Oh, Mary!" he cries, "tell me, darling, why are you here? Why are we not at home with the children? And tell me, dearest, how came those grey hairs in your young head to-day? And now that I look at you, you are not the same. It is Mary, but you look older. Has my illness hurt you so, my poor little girl?"

And then he burst into sobs; but restrains his grief, after a time, as he thinks that at least he is well now, and come back to help and comfort her when it might have been so different.

"Come, dearest, a cab is at the door. You can excuse yourself here, and we will go home together. I will spend the afternoon with you and the children, and we will forget this horrible day. And, Mary, I'll fix things at the bank to-morrow. I'll take the doctor's advice, and we will all go to the seaside for as long a holiday as you can enjoy."

Then the poor little woman and the kind old doctor gradually tell Charles Steadman the whole sad truth. It is ten years since he fell asleep in the old home at Park Place. When he awoke he was another man. They touched lightly on the need of restraint in the "hospital." With the loss of his supervision, and perhaps through fraud and trickery, his great fortune had melted away, and his delicately nurtured wife had been obliged to give up her home and seek employment for the support of the family. He is scarcely given to understand that this included the support of himself at the private "hospital"; yet he feels it, oh, how keenly!

She had established and successfully maintained a school for children, and this is the school building and the children are now in the school room upstairs awaiting the return of their teacher.

Then comes the cruellest blow of all—for it must come. The man is mad in his demand for little Ned and Edith, now grown large and handsome, he is sure. He is made to know—it is broken to him gently—that Teddie and Edith have been dead many years.

He bows his head in grief too deep to find expression—a dry-eyed, burning, awful grief.

He is penniless. The best years of his life have been passed in a madhouse; he has come forth a broken, shattered man who can only be a burden to this little frail, care-worn woman; he can scarcely hope to lessen her toil, to witness which will be intolerable. For ten long years his own dear Mary—bitter to contemplate!—has laboured in desolation of spirit to support in the asylum her insane husband who could not repay her womanly devotion with one word of love, with one look of gratitude; who in his insanity, was blind to her patient face, deaf to her appealing voice. And with it all, Edith and Teddie are gone. He can never touch them, see them, or hear them again.

"Oh, Heaven, it cannot be!" breaks despairingly from his trembling lips.

He feels again that velvety touch of gentle fingers, soothing, oh, so soothing! on brow and eyes. He opens his eyes beneath those magic fingers—oh! Happy, joyous transformation! The stiff, wooden chair becomes soft and easy to his aching frame. The wall recedes, then stand dark and beautiful in familiar form; the rows of books in shelf on shelf, the draperies, the furniture; oh! this is home again.

And now—a heavenly music to his hungry ears—that murmur of children's voices from the room above takes on the tones of little Ned, of lovely Edith—blissful sound! And all the time he feels the rhythmical stroke of the tender hands of his sweet wife Mary. Looking upward, he sees starry eyes gazing down in to his, and the dear face is young and free from care, and the beautiful hair is all a rich, dark, glossy brown.

* * * * *

Was this returning madness benignly sent by Providence to cloak a hopeless misery in robes of seeming happiness?

Or was it all a dream and this the blessed awakening?

J. Ridgard.

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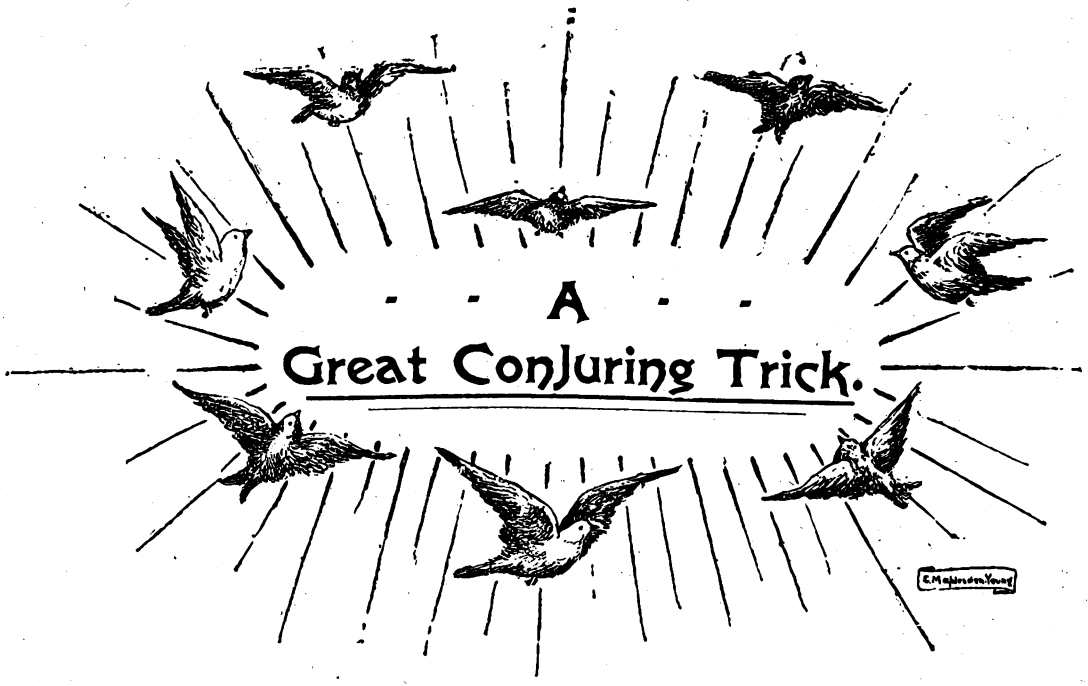

A Great Conjuring Trick.

THE eventful evening arrived at last. All day long I was in a perfect fever of excitement, thinking how I could act the part of host and provide the guests with sufficient amusement. Neville met me early on the day, and coolly informed me that he was going to bring a French marquis, whom he accidentally picked up at the club the preceding night.

"A marquis!" I exclaimed. "What in the name of all that's wonderful will we do with him?"

"Never mind," answered Neville gaily, "he is a jolly dog, and won't be particular. He heard that you possess good cigars and champagne, so he is going to grace your festive board with his presence."

"Very considerate of him, indeed," I drily rejoined. "I wonder will his presence at my festive board compensate me for the amount of cigars and champagne he is likely to consume."

"Come, now, don't be getting stingy," laughed Neville, as he glanced at his watch, "you have fallen in for a big rent-roll, and should enjoy it. You shall see me drop in with Monsieur Crapaud at eight. Until then, adieu."

"A marquis," I muttered as I hurried along. "I wonder what my deceased uncle would say if he accidentally heard, in that bourne from which no traveller returns, that my first step on getting the estate was to give a champagne supper to my student friends. By George, if Neville brings that Frenchman, as he surely will, the party will number thirteen—an unlucky number. I must see if I cannot get another. There's Burke, I would invite him only I have invited Desmond, and one Irishman is sufficient among a party whose political discussions generally end by one gentleman playfully flinging the decanter at another's head by way of emphasis. However, I will see before the time arrives."

By this time I arrived at my lodgings, or, as my friends more commonly term them, my "diggings," and found the servant (who performed the duties of cook, housemaid, hall porter, etc., in their rotation) in a heated discussion with a fair-haired, squat little gentleman, evidently a foreigner, judging by his gestures and broken English, both of which appeared unintelligible to the girl.

As I heard him mention Mons. Markham, I immediately introduced myself as that important personage, and requested the little man to kindly inform me of his wishes. He appeared delighted to have met me so fortunately, and smilingly handed me his card and a letter.

The card was that of Monsieur Lafette, and as I tore open the letter I glanced sharply at the stranger, who was employed in surveying the people who passed with a most sleepy air, which contrasted strangely with his animated conduct when I appeared on the scene.

The letter was from my younger brother Henry, who was the guest of an English family spending their winter on the Continent, and merely stated that the bearer, Mons. Lafette, was over in England on a pleasure trip, and as he was a total stranger to that country, he recommended him to my care, for, he added, "I am deeply indebted to him, and would like you to treat him well."

I immediately invited him to avail himself of the hospitality of my rooms, and remarked, "I am very glad you have arrived in time, monsieur, as I have invited a number of my bachelor friends to supper, and I am sure you will prove a valuable acquisition to our number, all the more so as you will fill a vacant place."

"I thank you," said he in his broken English. "I am very glad to fall into such hands, as I wish to see a little English society before I return to Paris, and I now see that your brother has not misinformed me when he said, 'You will always find Bob with some agreeable exploit on hand.'"

Meanwhile we were making ourselves comfortable

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before a bright fire, and I rang for refreshments, as monsieur said he felt fatigued after his long journey.

"May I ask you," said he, meanwhile refreshing the inner man, "how many nationalities do you intend having present this evening? No Germans, I hope, as I detest them."

"Well," I answered, smiling. "I rank nothing German among our acquaintances except, perhaps, some light wines, on which you can revenge yourself at your convenience. Of my friends, some are Irish, some Scotch, the majority English, and I think I shall have a countryman of yours present."

"Ah!" said he, carelessly, "who is he?"

"A sprig of nobility," I replied. "His name, if I remember aright, is the Marquis la René."

My little friend started, and looked at the clock, then jumped up and rang the bell with the air of one who had lived in the house for years.

"Pardon me," said he with a smile. "I quite forgot about dressing; it is now six o'clock, and by the time my luggage arrives I won't have much time to prepare for your friends."

He instructed the servant to send for the luggage, which soon arrived, and we both adjourned to make ourselves presentable.

I was astonished when I came down to find him in conversation with Desmond, who was evidently greatly amused with him, to judge from his frequent bursts of laughter.

Lafette turned round as I entered, and said:

"I was taking your place, Monsieur Markham, in your absence, but I am afraid I would prove but a poor substitute."

I replied that he was evidently amusing Desmond, who gave me a droll smile, which meant we will have some fun with him to-night.

Meanwhile the other fellows came dropping in, and were introduced with great solemnity to Mons. Lafette by Desmond, who performed the ceremony with the air of an undertaker.

Eight o'clock at last drew near, and as the clock chimed the hour we heard Neville laugh in the hall, and in a few seconds he appeared, accompanied by a powerfully-built, soldier-like man, whom he introduced all round as his friend the Marquis la René.

We all sat down, I occupying the seat of honour at the head of the table, with the marquis on my right, and Mons. Lafette on my left.

The conversation between these two worthies became most animated. The turf, the clubs, Paris, the fair women, Alsace and Lorraine, were all touched upon and criticised, and I was congratulating myself that we were going to have a regular good night. As the time flew swiftly on, speeches were delivered, in which I appeared, painted in the most glowing colours, doubtless conjured up with copious libations of Mumm's best. Toasts, recitations, and songs followed, and in the choruses of the latter the two Frenchmen lustily joined.

I noticed that Lafette was most temperate, and drank in very small quantities, and I once saw him empty his glass beneath the table.

Then Neville, who was an amateur conjuror, proposed to show some tricks. He placed money in a hat, caused it to disappear, and then found it in some of the company's pockets. He once searched the marquis for half-a-crown, and in so doing exposed an inside pocket, out of which peeped the butt of a revolver.

Neville did not appear to notice it, but Lafette gave me a meaning smile, which I afterwards understood.

Mons. Lafette then proposed a trick, which he said he once saw performed—viz., "He required the strongest man in the room to allow his hands to be tied behind his back, and to retire with him outside the door, when he would so completely change him that the company would not recognise him. All in the room to sit perfectly still during the interval."

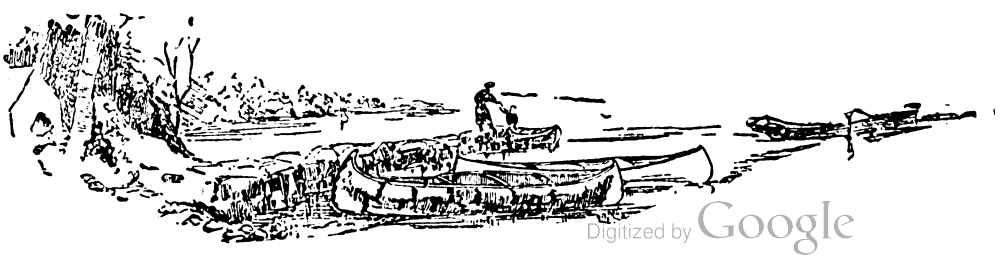
This suggestion was received with a burst of laughter, but as he insisted he could perform the trick, Neville, who was nearly drunk, proposed a bet of £10, which monsieur accepted. Thereupon Neville selected the marquis as the most powerful man in the room, and he unwillingly allowed his hands to be tied, and adjourned outside with his tiny countryman.

In a few moments we heard curses and oaths in the deep voice of the marquis, and sounds of a deep struggle. We were all highly delighted, and in a few moments a tall, clean-shaven man, with close-cut hair, appeared in the doorway with Mons. Lafette behind him, who was holding, strange to say, a revolver in his hand.

"Gentlemen," said Mons. Lafette in perfect English, "allow me to explain this feat. I had some slight difficulty in performing it, and, thinking that your tying would not be strong enough, took the liberty of putting on these," turning the marquis round and showing us his wrists handcuffed. "This gentleman, who styles himself the Marquis la René, is Jules Farrin, a noted blackleg, whom I daresay you will remember as the murderer of an old lady a short time ago in Paris. He decamped with her money, and all trace was lost. I heard, however, that he was moving in good society in London, and procured a letter of introduction to Mons. Markham, and was fortunate enough to bag the game at the first attempt. I am Mons. Clogue, the Inspector of the Paris Police. Pray, gentlemen, do not let this trifling episode interfere with your evening's amusement. As for you, monsieur," bowing to me, "accept my most sincere thanks for your hospitality," and turning to Neville, said: "I forgive you the wager; it may be consolation to you, as I am afraid my friend has completely sold you. Adieu, messieurs," and he disappeared with his prisoner.

In a few moments we heard a cab rolling away from the door, which was the last episode in Monsieur Lafette's conjuring.

ARTHUR RHODES.



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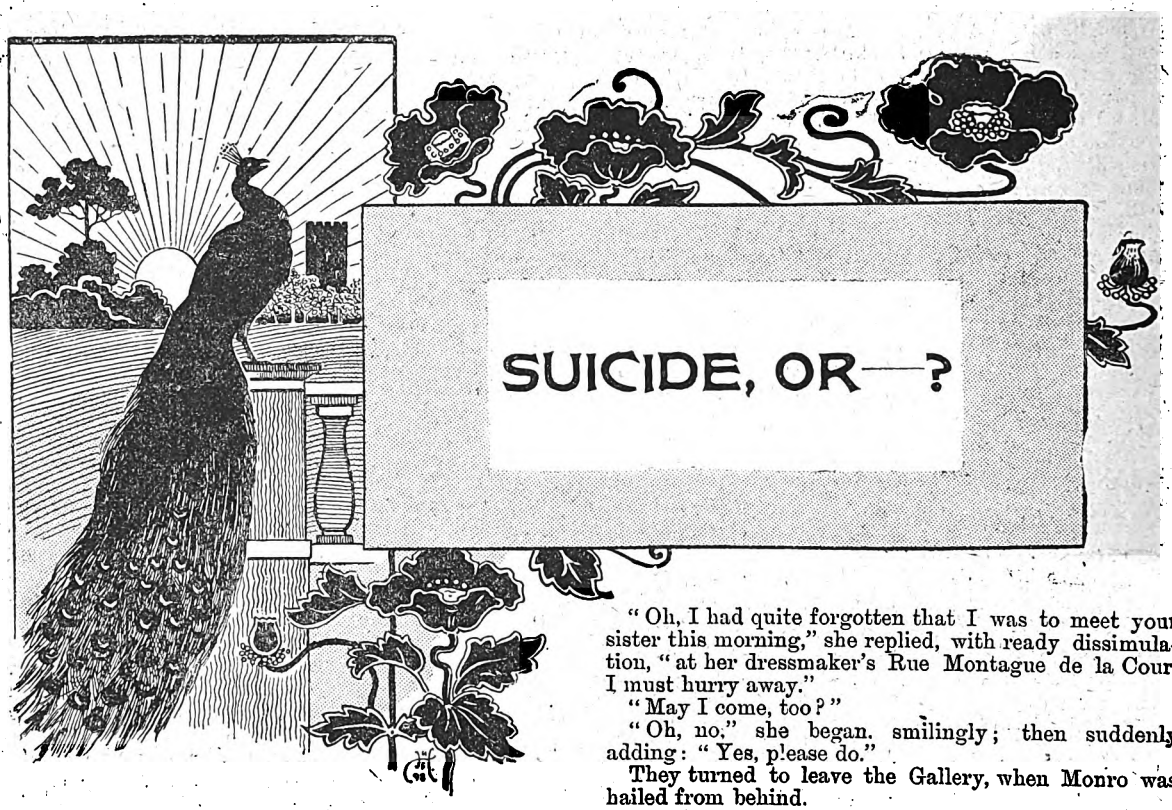

ARCHIE MONRO was undeniably in love with fascinating Mrs. Arnold Marchmont; yet, with the instinct of Scotch caution, even as he looked into her lovely limpid eyes, he could not help asking himself why her husband had committed suicide after three weeks of married life!

Phyllis (Mrs. Marchmont's name was Phyllis) had told him, with tears that made her eyes look softer and more beautiful, what a cruel trial his sudden fit of insanity had been; she blamed him with a touch of hard bitterness in her voice for the suffering he had brought upon her by the inconsiderateness of his end, which killed her affection for him.

As they sat together before the newly-acquired Rembrandt in the Musée de Peinture in Brussels, he longed to ask her then and there to be his wife; he felt *almost* sure that her answer would be yes; but, although the gallery was almost deserted at this hour, he thought it was hardly the place for a proposal. That evening they were all going to the Théatre Royal de la Monnaie, and he was sure to have a better opportunity for tender passages when escorting her to her elegant *appartement* after the opera. But why did her husband commit suicide?

Phyllis Marchmont knew that she was looking very charming, and knew that Archie Monro thought so; she also knew the words that were trembling on his lips, and she even followed his train of reasoning, and knew that his proposal would come that evening. But she was impatient, and longed to hasten the *dénouement*.

"What is the matter?" demanded Monro, tenderly, noticing her give a sudden start.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten that I was to meet your sister this morning," she replied, with ready dissimulation, "at her dressmaker's Rue Montague de la Cour. I must hurry away."

"May I come, too?"

"Oh, no," she began, smilingly; then suddenly adding: "Yes, please do."

They turned to leave the Gallery, when Monro was hailed from behind.

"Archie, Archie Monro."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Marchmont, I will follow you," said Monro.

Mrs. Marchmont walked hurriedly on, and Monro turned back to find his hand violently seized and shaken like a pump-handle by an elderly clergyman.

"Why, Padre, what brings you to Brussels?" said Archie, cordially; "I thought you never left the shores of Old England."

"Why, my dear boy, Maria and I have been to America since I saw you last! Now, I think, we shall never be stay-at-homes any longer. Maria was wild to visit the 'Continong,' but she is knocked-up already with sight-seeing."

"Where are you staying? I must come and see your wife. But I think I must run away now, I left the lady I was with rather unceremoniously."

"If you don't mind, Archie, I want to have a talk with you. I had been watching you for some time, waiting an opportunity to speak to you; but seeing you so *very* much taken up with your companion, I did not wish to interrupt until I saw *who* your companion was."

"Do you know Mrs. Marchmont?"

"I know the lady with whom you were talking, and she knows me; as soon as she saw me she took her departure! If you are interested in her I can tell you a few things about her."

"I am very much interested. I think she is the most perfectly charming woman I know."

"Wait a bit!" said the Padre, rather cynically. "Arnold Marchmont was an old pupil of mine, before your time, and Maria and I were very fond of him.

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When he came of age, for some reason or another, he had to make a will, and asked me to be his executor. For some years I had lost sight of him, then he sent me a paper with the announcement of his marriage to a Miss Phyllis Bryant, of New York—you have noticed a *soupcon* of Transatlantic accent in her? I remembered his will, and thought that my executorship would never come to anything, as his marriage would entail a new will. Three weeks afterwards I had a short notice from the lawyer who drew up the will, informing me that poor Arnold had shot himself, and that he believed no new will had been made since his marriage. Maria and I were very much shocked; we could not believe that Arnold Marchmont was the man to make away with himself. I went to town at once and went to the apartments, in Emperor's Gate, where they had lived since his marriage. I was prepossessed by Mrs. Marchmont's beauty, but the first words she spoke entirely disenchanted me.

"'Oh, the will is no good, you know, as it was made before his marriage.'

"'I am aware of the fact, madam,' I replied coldly; 'but as it seems my poor friend made no other will, I shall take it upon myself to carry out such of his wishes expressed in the existing will as will not interfere with your or any legal rights.'

"'Perhaps you will attend the inquest?' she said, in a tone of annoyance.

"'Certainly I shall,' I replied, decidedly; adding to myself, 'and will thoroughly sift the evidence, too, my lady!'

"Well, nothing came out at the inquest; a servant had heard high voices and quarrelling; then later, Mrs. Marchmont ran downstairs to alarm the house, saying her husband had shot himself. Hers was the only evidence; she acknowledged that they had had a few words about money matters, that he had then retired to their bedroom adjoining; had seized a pistol from an open portmanteau (*hers*, I elicited) and had shot himself. One barrel only was fired, and that so close to the heart that the clothes were singed. The pistol was picked up on the floor, but in what position with respect to the body no two witnesses agreed. Verdict, as usual, 'temporary insanity!'"

"Now, my dear Padre, you are dreadfully prejudiced against poor Mrs. Marchmont. Of course she could not have shot him! Absurd!"

"Just wait, Archie, before you commence her defence. I confess I was prejudiced against the woman, and I determined to find out something more about her than that she was Miss Bryant, of New York. I wanted to know why she had a pistol in her portmanteau. Surely all young ladies of New York do not carry pistols! By one of those strange coincidences which happen in real life, I met, that very day, an old college friend who put me on the right track. He was a doctor, and had been several years in America. I asked him if he knew any families of the name of Bryant in the States.

"'I know a poor, sickly fellow named Bryant,' he said.

"'Has he, by any chance, a daughter named Phyllis?' I inquired.

"'No,' he said, 'he has no family; his wife left him a few months ago because she had got tired of his querulous temper, brought on by suffering. It is thought she committed suicide, as she threatened it and was known to have weapons.'

"A sudden conviction seized me that this was the same woman! You will laugh at the old Padre, Archie, but the doctor put me in the right way to find out the truth, and Marie and I started for America. In three months' time I had the satisfaction of proving poor Arnold's will, for she was not his wife at all."

"Then she is not a widow?" inquiried Archie Monro.

"Yes, she is, *now*; her proper husband died only a few weeks after Arnold was murdered!"

"Murdered! Come, Padre, aren't you content to prove the woman weak and wicked enough in all conscience, without believing that she murdered Marchmont?"

"I have not finished yet! You have noticed her hands?"

"I have. They are beautiful."

"They struck me, when I first saw her, as being of beautiful shape and very white—a trifle too plump, perhaps, but that is being hypercritical. My attention was attracted to a triangular bruise between the thumb and forefinger of her right hand. It was very black and defined; it looked as if it might have been caused by the lid of a heavy tin box falling on it. All the time she was giving her evidence my eyes were continually arrested by this mark; I knew it by heart. In the matter of the will the heir presented Mrs. Bryant with a thousand pounds—which was a generous and uncalled-for thing, but it saved publicity and litigation—and, amongst other things, the fatal pistol came into my possession. My wife was anxious to examine the weapon, which was a large, clumsy one, of American make; I took out the cartridges and gave it to her. Maria held the muzzle towards her breast, saying, 'If he really shot himself, he must have held the pistol so!' She snapped the lock and gave a little scream. *She had pinched her hand with the lock of the pistol!* Next day a black, triangular bruise appeared on her plump white hand, *in the same place and exactly similar to the mark on Mrs. Bryant's after Arnold Marchmont shot*—himself! What do you find in this coincidence, Archie?"

"Not much for a court of law, Padre, but too much for the relationship I contemplated!"

When "Mrs. Arnold Marchmont" and her party were getting ready for the opera, Archie Monro was driving to the Gare du Nord, suddenly called to England, as his note of excuse explained.

E. G.

What is the difference between a policeman and a banker? One is a guardian of the peace and the other a guardian of the "pieces."

Angry Manager: "What did you mean by smiling in that death scene?"

Actor: "With the salary you pay, death seems a pleasant relief."

Unprepossessing Female (to photographer): "How much would you take me for?"

Photographer: "About sixteen, madam."

He got the job.

The railway accident had been a terrible one, and one of the men, who was carrying the thirty-seventh victim up the embankment, said, with strong feeling, "Somebody will have to pay dearly for all this!"

The mangled passenger opened his eyes and glared at the speaker: "The company is not to blame," he said feebly; "this is a dispensation of Providence!"

He was the solicitor to the company.

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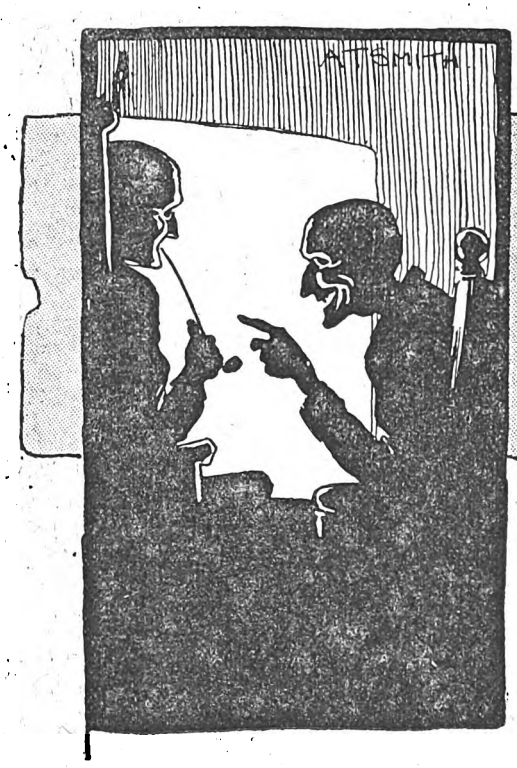

Mrs. Grunt's Young Friend.

Cannes.

DEAR HARCOURT,—Would you like some fishing? The May-fly is up, and they send me word from home that it is a splendid trout season. My rheumatism still keeps me an exile here, else, as you may be sure, I should be tackling the wily gentlemen myself. The Grange is quite deserted, but if you care to go and take temporary possession of the old place, Grunt and his wife, at the Lodge, will look after you and see that you don't starve.

Sincerely Yours,

MATTHEW HAWTHURST.

This is the letter I found waiting for me when I came down to my solitary breakfast one bright May morning about two years ago.

"Would I like some fishing?" I exclaimed, "I should rather think I would!" and with alacrity I sat down, and there and then wrote and accepted the old gentleman's invitation.

Before I go any further, reader, I think I had better just explain to you who I am. My name is Dudley Harcourt, my age is thirty, I am in her Majesty's service, and at the time of which I am writing, I was rejoicing in a year's leave home from India.

Old Hawthurst's place, "The Grange," is down in quite the prettiest part of Blankshire, and I must say that the prospect of a few weeks' fishing pleased me extremely; for one thing, not being a particularly sociable being, it was such a very feasible way of getting out of London. I wrote off directly to old Grunt at the Lodge, and told him to expect me by the last train on the next day.

Next morning, however, I changed my mind and went by an earlier train. I arrived at the little rustic station of Darley soon after midday, and, of course, having changed my time, found no one there to meet me, so leaving my luggage with an antiquated porter and shouldering my rods, I prepared to walk up to the old Grange—a walk of about three miles.

Ah! years ago, as a boy, how well I had known this road; my poor old father and I had often come down here together for the fishing. Thinking of these old days, I strolled on, and found myself, almost before I realised it, at my destination.

It was a grim, deserted-looking place. In anticipation of my coming the house was evidently being aired, for all the windows and doors were open.

I walked in at the French windows of the dining-room, intending to make for the smoking-room which adjoined it, when to my great surprise, the most soft and musical voice issued therefrom: it certainly wasn't that of Mrs. Grunt! I stood stock still and listened.

"Down, Pat, down," the voice said. "Bad dog, that's the second time you have nearly made me upset this jug! Sit up, sir, at once!"

I stepped a little more forward, and what could exceed my astonishment when I saw through the half-open door the form of the most lovely girl.

Tall and slender, she stood in her white gown arranging some dusky roses on the rather high old-fashioned chimney-piece.

The sunlight glinted in, and falling athwart her head, turned her hair to burning gold. Sitting up beside her erect on his hind legs, with an air of indescribable reproach in his pathetic brown eyes, was a rough Irish terrier.

It was about as pretty a picture as I have ever seen. Who could she be? I thought, and leant forward so as to better see her face; as I did so, my rod struck against the leg of the table and she looked round. With a little cry she sprang back, her basket dropped from her hand and the remaining flowers fell scattered to the ground.

"I beg your pardon," I said; "I am afraid I have startled you."

For a moment she did not answer; then suddenly a subtle change seemed to come over her face, and, dropping me a demure little curtesy, she said, with the quaintest assumption possible of the Blankshire dialect:

"Oh! no sir, not at all. I'm Mrs. Grunt's young friend as was asked by her to step in and see to the flowers."

Then, picking up the basket and jug of water, she quickly passed me by, and disappeared through the French windows.

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"Mrs. Grunt's young friend!" I slowly ejaculated, and carefully picked up the fallen crimson roses.

* * * * *

A week passed by, and instead of forgetting I found myself growing more and more curious about my fair young friend with the Irish terrier. Innumerable as were the feelers I threw out to that wretched old Grunt, I could learn nothing about her; he seemed to have got deafer even than when I last knew him! Once only had I caught sight of her during that week, and this is how it happened.

One evening after dinner, I had gone down as usual to the river. It was a lovely night, but luck was against me, and I couldn't hook a single fish. For a solid hour I had been tackling one wily beggar, and had just got hopes of him, when suddenly from the bank on the other side of the river a dog set up a most fiendish barking. Of course I lost my fish, needless to say my temper, and hurling some unlovely epithets at the luckless hound, I was about to reel in impatiently, when a sweet voice from the opposite side suddenly broke silvery clear on the air:

"I am afraid Pat has spoiled your sport," it said rather tremulously; "please let me apologise for him; I am so very sorry."

I glanced up, and through the dusky light I perceived before me a grey-cloaked woman's figure.

I rose, but before I had time to answer the apparition was swiftly disappearing across the meadow opposite.

"Who can she be?" I cried, for of course I had recognised the voice as being that of "Mrs. Grunt's young friend!" and there and then I registered a deep and earnest vow to find out who she was, and where she came from.

Next day I set to work in real earnest to gain some information about her.

I went into the village, just a small cluster of cottages, and made inquiries as to the families living in the neighbourhood; there were but three, I was told, two of them were away for the summer, and the third was composed of an old man and his wife and one little grandchild. That was useless, then, so I determined to pay a personal visit to Grunt's cottage.

It was of no avail though, and I might as well have stayed away, for Mrs. Grunt was "upstairs with rheumatics" and Grunt himself was deafer than ever.

No clue whatever could I find, and although I spun out my fishing time for a good six weeks longer, not another glimpse did I catch of "Mrs. Grunt's young friend."

* * * * *

I passed the summer away in yachting, and autumn found me again in London.

It was the 22nd of October; soon my leave would be up, and I should be on my way back to India again. I felt as if I should not be at all sorry to get back to my work, for somehow or another (laugh at me if you like, reader, and say you don't believe in love at first sight) I had never felt quite the same since my spring fishing-time. Try as hard as I might, I could not get the music of that unknown voice out of my head.

Well, be that as it may, on this evening of the 22nd, I found myself struggling into evening kit, and hurrying off to a big "At Home" at Lady Cranthorne's.

I was very late, the rooms were quite crowded by the time I arrived, and I had great difficulty in threading my way through the throng to pay my respects to my hostess. At last I reached her.

"Ah! how do you do, Captain Harcourt?" she exclaimed on perceiving me. "Faithless man! I thought you were never coming, but 'better late than never,' you know, and you are just in time to make yourself useful by singing."

With this, and without waiting for an answer, she led the way to the piano.

"I am awfully sorry, Lady Cranthorne," I began, "but——"

"But you don't accompany yourself, and want someone to do it for you, I suppose," she exclaimed, airily cutting short my excuses, "that difficulty is easily overcome. Captain Harcourt; my niece Marjory will be delighted to come to your aid. Ah!" she continued, "there she is, talking to old Sir John Frere, come with me, and I will introduce you."

She led me over to where a tall, slender girl in white, with her back to us, was deep in conversation with an old gentleman. Lady Cranthorne touched her lightly with her fan, and had just begun:

"Marjory, dear, let me introduce Captain Harcourt," when the girl turned, and, reader, what could have exceeded my astonishment and delight, when, once again, I found myself face to face with "Mrs. Grunt's young friend!"

* * * * *

There is very little more left to tell, reader. Marjory Hawthurst is now Mrs. Harcourt, my wife; in fact, has occupied that position for the last year. The mystery I had chosen to envelope her in vanished into thin air after five minutes' conversation with her at that "At Home" of Lady Cranthorne's. It appears that Marjory is old Matthew Hawthurst's niece. During that spring of which I have written she had not been very well, so had persuaded her parents (not knowing, of course, that I was in temporary possession of The Grange) to let her come down, with her dog Pat as a companion, and pass a few days with her old nurse, Mrs. Grunt, at the Lodge. Wishing for absolute quiet she had told the Grunts not to mention to anyone that she was there, and a week after my arrival she had gone back to London.

That was all. That was the solution of my mystery! One thing, however, I must say before I conclude, and that is, that never to the end of my life shall I cease to remember with joy that day in the sweet springtime when my eyes first fell on, and met those of "Mrs. Grunt's young friend."

M. E. M

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

IX.—WET HORSES

As I walked down the street of this little Panhandle town—built first where we boys used to chase mustang and hunt buffalo—and I saw something that carried me back on the trail further than my mind ever likes to go.

It was just a rough cage of wire netting, about five feet high, out in front of the "Cowboy's Retreat," with two big mountain eagles in it.

I set my palm against the thing, and leant down and looked in at them. They must have been kept there a good while, I thought, and were used to the curiosity of their inferiors, for they didn't notice me at all.

They sat there in the degradation of captivity; their eyes, that used to look the sun square in the face, were like lead. Their big wings, that were made to carry them a quarter of a mile at a stroke in the clean air of heaven, struck—only half spread—against both sides of the cage at once, as the eagles flopped awkwardly from one perch to the other.

I'm not soft-hearted. I suppose I was as much so by nature as most people; but I've had a good deal to toughen me. The cattle business in all its details including some occasional wholesale starving and freezing in bitter winters; the necessary cruelties of the trail, branding and shipping; the life in general on a wild frontier, I think, has a tendency to stiffen up over tender, sensibilities. But there was a reason why these eagles, sitting dull and hopeless in their low, cramped prison and with no prospect of freedom ahead, touched me uncommonly close.

I went in and had a drink with the man that keeps the place, and found him a pretty decent sort of chap. He told me how he came to get the eagles of the fellow that trapped them, and that he'd had them nearly a year. I had a notion that he took them to settle a bar score, and was sort of tired of them, for I got him to sell them to me for a hundred dollars. Then I took them out to one side, where a lot of fools wouldn't be shooting at them, and interfering with me, and turned them loose. The saloon man and a good share of the population took distant observations of me, wondering, I reckon, what sort of crank had struck the town.

When the cage was lifted off them the eagles stood a minute or so; turning their heads about, lifting and trying their wings, Then they rose heavily, side by side, right up till they looked like swallows; then sailed off, straight as arrows, as though they had seen the snowy tops of the Rockies, four hundred miles to the northwest.

Why did I throw away a hundred dollars to turn a couple of miserable, worthless birds loose out of a cage?

I love a match—a square, stand up game—even to the finish; but I always hated to see a thing that's brave and wild and savage in its nature, in captivity. I'd break a trap any day to let a rattlesnake out, even if I shot it the next minute.

But it was more than this feeling that was at the bottom of my little deal in live stock of the upper air. It was the remembrance of that experience of mine in old Mexico, in the later part of the seventies.

I hate to be made to remember that time. Something in me flinches at it, like a pony that's been struck in the face flinches at a raised hand.

My partner and I went down to old Mexico in seventy-five. I was twenty-five, and Wade a year or so younger We both had a little money, about a thousand dollars apiece, that we'd made from trail work, or droving, and various quiet ways, such as a little side business in branding with a gate rod, or anything that came handy; and Captain Cameron, an old partner of Wade's who was down in Mexico getting rich, hand over fist, sent him word that there was a lot of money to be made there in "wet horses."

I've heard "wet horses" described as stock smuggled across from old Mexico into Texas, and having just swum the Rio Grande; and again as stolen horses, brought and offered for sale while wet with the sweat of a night's chase.

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Anyhow, "wet horses," are understood to be the sort that owe some government a duty, or that have got mixed up in their own minds as to their proper owners; and the horses in which we dealt were very damp indeed.

Cap. took us to a magnificent old Don who was high up in the Mexican army, and had the buying of the horses for the cavalry.

We had an interview. It was a wonderful interview. There was port wine—the finest I ever tasted—and not a word said on either side that the whole government wouldn't have been welcome to hear. But for all the ceremony and Spanish style, the Don gave us the points. When we had left, the understanding was as clear as if we had bargained like horse-traders doing a secret deal.

We were to bring him anything in the shape of horses, procured wherever (and however) suited to us, receive a rattling price, and no questions asked. The Señor Don got his take-off out of the price, of course; but he was a gentleman, and left us still the kind of profit that would have made very rich men of us in a pair of years, if everything had gone right.

We got the horses, mostly, away up in the mountains of Southern Cohahuila, for about one-third their value. Gathered up over a wide district, as convenience might serve the gentlemen who furnished them to us, they were naturally of all sorts, ranging from somebody's well-bred saddle horse down to the meanest little scrubs; but for the most part they were poor stuff.

They were stolen, every hoof of them. But that was not our business. We did not even know those who actually did the work. It was done by regular gangs of horse thieves, and we bought direct of the leaders.

We always went after the horses heavily armed, and had six or eight Mexican drivers, also armed, to take them back. We carried the money with which we paid for them in gold; and in that nest of robbers and cut-throats, where a man's life would be stamped out of him in a minute by one of those sneaking assassins for the price of a drink of *pulque*, it was business lively enough to satisfy even Wade and me.

About nine o'clock one brilliant, moonlight night, we were coming along a narrow mountain pass in Zacatecas. Captain Cameron was ahead, with a little bunch of horses and four drivers.

Wade and I were riding at the rear of our bunch, for every cent we had in the world was in bags of coin, on a little grey mule, just in front of us. We had brought it all to buy a large drove which we had got word would be ready for us, but there was a failure somewhere, and we were going back with only forty horses. It looked queer.

Cap. and Wade, and I, were on the watch, riding with hands on our pistols, and all our arms ready.

We came to a place where the road made a dip, turned a little to one side, and ran through a black shadow, cast down by a bunch of *nopals* on the height above. Cap. rode forward, and his voice came back to us out of this shadow and dip in a fearful yell and a string of oaths. Then there were pistol shots and more yells.

All the Mexican drivers in both Cap's party and ours sneaked away like scared coyotes. They were bribed or won over, I suppose; but they would have done the same anyhow, likely.

Wade and I, with one white boy we had, went ahead with cocked pistols; and there in the pass—partly in the moonlight, as white as day, partly in the shadow—we had a desperate hand to hand fight. That little dark hollow was full of long Mexican knives. There was no running away for us, and the others, who had, maybe, not expected such resistance, were bound, now that they were in for it to have the little grey mule and his heavy coin bags.

When it was done, Cap. lay stretched out dead and ghastly; his face, scrowling and furious, covered with knife wounds, his clothing torn almost off him by clutching hands and wayside cactus thorns.

The Texas boy was dead, not far away, in the shadow.

Wade lay unconscious, bleeding from three wounds any one of which would have taken him to his last account in twenty-four hours.

I had a pistol shot wound in my head, that injured the skull but did not break through it; and in my shoulder was a horrible, gaping hole of a bayonet thrust.

I never knew how many of the other fellows we had done for, but I'm sure we didn't owe them anything. I fainted from loss of blood, and the next I knew, I found Wade and myself in a dirty little adobe hut, with our wounds dressed, in a sort of way, and some water and food beside me. I could hear a sentry shuffling up and down in the front, and one at the back of the house. The roof was partly gone and I judged by the moonlight that it was about one o'clock.

Wade lay and died with his head on my knees. The moonlight, through the broken roof, poured over his face; and at first he looked up and talked to it like a baby. But after a while he got wild and broke out all at once.

"Boys, it's awful—it's awful! I never thought nothin' much about it, never till now. To live like this, year after year! I reckon God made us—we're put here somehow—an' it seems to me were meant to be rather good. We must have been, for look at some men, honest, always a-payin' every cent they owe; never a-swearin' to 'mount to nothin', nor puttin' up their brands on to nothin' that ain't their own; no more thinkin' o' gittin' drunk than as if they wasn't no sich thing; an' they look at shootin', an' knifin', an' killin' of a feller man as awful—awful—couldn't do it, nohow.

"Not angills, ye know, not angills. I've always felt that a angill, here in this world 'd be a mighty uninterestin' monotonous chump to chum with, well-meanin' but no go in 'em. But I know they's sich men as them, I've knowed folks that knowed 'em. Plantation Purvis wuz most that way, an' then think of us, our ways, an' our lives! I've got drunk—always. I've lied, an' swore, an' gambled, an' fleeced fellers out o' the money they'd earned, w'y jest commonly. W'y, when I wuzn't nothin' hardly but a kid, an Slavin an' me wuz workin' that Bar Y range, we burnt out brands, right along. I can't tell all the wicked things I've done!

"Honestly, in a sort o' way, I didn't know no better—I thought 'twas smart. Don't count it all in ag'in me—not all! For as I'm layin' here to die, I sorter didn't know no better. It seemed to me that these fellers I wuz speakin' of, wuz a pore sort o' men, an'—missed a heap—an' 'twuz smart—to—oh,—Heaven—don't—"

He raised one hand like a little child if you go to strike it, and died with the last word and motion.

I tell you it was the worst thing I had to take. It was bad enough before—wounded, stiff, weak with pain and bleeding, stuck like a rat in that miserable hole of a Mexican prison, with every hope of being shot as soon as I could stand up, and Wade lying there in that awful white moonlight, dying—this was enough. But when he weakened so at the last, and I couldn't get him to

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now me, nor quiet him anyhow, when he would run on and on, and on, with that string of terrible talk about things that a well man, free, and among his own people, wouldn't want to have called up to him, it seemed to me as if my time had come to answer up to something that had been keeping a tally on me.

They were strange feelings. I shook all over—and I never was counted a coward. I wished—I didn't know what. I was sick—sick of it all; but to be dead—well, being dead didn't seem to me, like it sometimes had, a good way to end it, and be done. If I could go back and be a child, and try it all over again—but that seemed a mighty long, uncertain way.

I straightened Wade out in the deep shadow, where the moon couldn't get at that look on his face, and drank every drop out of my little pocket flask; and after a while I got to sleep.

Well, I laid in that jail eleven months. Eleven long, dragging, almost hopeless months, without a word of English to hear or read; with nothing to do but eat, and sleep, and think—and I'm not a man that has any liking for that last amusement.

I always hated worse to be hindered than to be hungry. I ran away from home and my father's authority when I was fourteen; and since that time, whether things were good or bad with me, at least there was nobody who could say to me: "You shall," or "You shan't," or lay a straw across the path I pleased to take.

I had lived in the kind of country, and lived the sort of life calculated to make this almost solitary confinement torture.

I used to lie all night and dream of the plains of West Texas—air, light, distance—room for whole nations of people—and wake to find myself—me, that used to have it all for mine—shut in four adobe walls.

I used to own a mount of eight ponies, the best in the whole cattle country. I remember chasing mustang, running antelope and wolves, and hunting buffalo on them, upon those plains where it looked as if you could ride from daybreak till dark, and from horizon to horizon, without a break or a barrier.

And here my limbs were shrivelling in disuse. I could go fifteen feet against a dead wall, and fifteen feet back, against another. And my blood crawled through my veins where it used to leap and laugh.

It was torment at first, absolute torture. Then it was gnawing, cankering, misery.

It was in the summer of '76, in the struggle between Lerdo and Diaz, that this happened,

It was a straggling bunch of thievish guerrillas—calling themselves Lerdo's men—that had taken us, our horses, and our money. I never could tell why they didn't shoot me, to save my board bill and the trouble of guarding me. They had several spells of debating it, but it was always put off for some reason.

There were times when I'd have been glad enough to have them do it.

I hadn't a cent to bribe with, nor any friend who might be reached. And yet, generally, there stayed by me a sort of hope that I would get out of it, after all.

And I did. I was waked one morning from my dreams of liberty by the sounds of rapid firing. There was a big fight going on outside, sure enough. At the noise, and the thought that I couldn't get out, or make myself heard, or raise a finger anyhow, I went perfectly crazy, as men long solitary confined will. I flung myself on the door, swearing, crying, bruising my fists on it, trying to beat it down.

Suddenly, in the midst of the uproar, I recognised that some one outside was battering in the door, and as it toppled forward and the gun barrels appeared over it, I tore open the bosom of my shirt and yelled:

"Shoot here, you dogs and cowards, and shoot straight!"

Oh, I was clean crazy.

It was a troop of Mexican cavalry, which had come up to clean out my captors, who had tried to make a war-play at a government mule train.

There was my old friend, the Señor Don, who bought horses for the cavalry. When he saw me he almost shed tears; and when I told him how long I had been there, where Wade and Cap. and the others were, he sent out and ordered the rest of the prisoners to be shot before breakfast.

He was ready to help me to a new start in wet horses; but I'd had enough. He said, in the kindness of his heart, and that beautiful Spanish of his, that I was his child, his cruelly-injured child. He was a good old boy under all his stuffed, silver-plated uniform and his Spanish spread-eagle.

I took the money he gave me and went straight to the plains as those eagles flew to the Rockies this morning. Didn't I know how they felt when I found them? I guess I did. And I knew what they felt when they spread out their great wings in the mile-high air, took their bearings, and flew toward the crags of their old buccaneering grounds once more; to rear their savage young, or fight, and scream, and plunder in freedom.

"YOUR son is an actor, you say, Mr. Maginnis?"

"Faith, he is."

"And what *rôles* does he play?"

"Rolls, is it? Faith, he rolls up the curtain."

"WHAT is love?" asked an editor. He has since been deluged with answers mostly from the fair sex. One lady says: "Love is an itching of the heart that we cannot get at to scratch."

WE are willing to take a certain amount of stock phrased in newspaper accounts of the late blizzard, but when a New York paper tells us about a zephyr carrying a bed quilt sixty-one miles and then going back for the sheet, we're not there.

"GEORGE," she whispered softly, "mark yonder breadth of cloud, stretching to the utmost part of the heavens—a boundless, infinite sea of nothingness."

"Nothingness?" he echoed. "Why, goodness gracious, Maria, there's a quart of rain in every square foot of that cloud."

"ARE you still taking painting lessons, Mamie?"

"No, I left yesterday; I don't like my teacher."

"Why not?"

"He has such a disagreeable way of talking. He told me that if I kept on some time longer I might be able to whitewash a paling."

"Is your mother ill again?"

"Oh, no; ma is well enough now she has got a new fur-lined cloak for next winter. She played consumption on pa, and coughed, and made pa believe she couldn't rise, and got the doctor to prescribe a fur-lined cloak, and pa went down and got one, and ma has improved wonderfully. Her cough has all gone now."

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THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK.

A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD-BYE TO NANT-Y-BRYN!

As if my very words had been a spell to conjure up their forms, the women, who had fled out of the house from the scene of the combat, now rushed into the hall uttering wild screams, which rose high above the dreadful chorus, and, close upon their heels, adding no sound to the wild tumult, but for that very thing striking a deeper note of awful terror, came the wild wolfish figures of the Red Men of the Dusk.

Their naked feet made no sound upon the dark flags of the floor. They glided in, man after man, some lapped in bloodstained wrappings covering wounds gained on the spot from which they had fled but a few nights before, and to which they returned on other footing. For they came as masters now. At first it was not a fight, but a slaughter. The keen pike heads were driven like serpents' stings time and again into the huddled, drunken mass of bewildered retainers, and the terrible sword of Ieuan Gwyelt hewed down man after man.

Even more dreadful and ruthless than the Men of the Dusk, their women swarmed to the attack. Gaunt, savage creatures, their eyes gleaming wildly through foul tangles of matted locks, they drew in behind the fighting line, thrust themselves through it, dropped upon hands and knees, and crept swiftly beneath the pikes, a long knife held between the clenched teeth. Woe to the man who lost his footing in that rude huddle of fight. Like questing dogs, the women sought out the wounded, thrust them down in the press, and stabbed them again and again, with shrieks of ferocious joy, for, unlike the men, they were not silent.

This dreadful apparition of people whom all had deemed utterly broken and vanquished, intensified the almost superstitious dread with which they had ever been regarded, and for awhile the attacked seemed to shrink from measuring strength with them.

In numbers the men of the house still held an advantage, but it was rapidly being lost as the Men of the Dusk plied in ferocious silence their deadly thrusts, and the women shrieked like fiends as they slashed their knives across the throats of the groaning fallen. But the very extremity of the danger drove the garrison to stand stoutly together, and they turned their swords from each other to the common foe. Some of the cooler heads formed a line across the hall and opposed their bucklers to the dripping points, thus giving an opportunity for their slower friends to rally. I saw this was no place for my love any longer, and I leapt up to the stair head, and called upon her. She ran to me, and Siani followed.

"Y Gwylliaid Cochion!" "Y Gwylliaid Cochion!" A score of voices were screaming it. Both of them cried out.

"Yes," said I; "the Red Men of the Dusk have broken in and taken those quarrelsome fellows utterly by surprise, but have no fear, dearest. I do not think——"

I stopped short, for Enid uttered a faint cry and pointed over my shoulder. I turned, but Sir Arthur was a doomed man when my eyes fell upon him. He had just raced into sight, flying upstairs to seek a hiding-place, and had barely set foot upon the gallery when a pike whizzed after him and buried its head deep between his shoulders. He pitched forward on his face, and, as he fell, two half-naked young fellows and a woman ran in on him and drove their knives home together in his body. The woman was old Megan, her great, hollow eyes shining with savage joy, and she plunged in her knife again and again, laughing aloud.

I caught hold of Enid and held her close to my breast to shut out the dreadful sight. She trembled a little and then I held her tighter, for I felt her strength failing. She had received shock upon shock during the day; between grief and excitement she was worn out, and now lay fainting in my arms. I laid her gently down and delivered her to Siani, keeping myself, as our situation demanded, a keen watch below.

The three wild figures struck unweariedly at the object of their vengeance, though life had long since departed, then Ieuan sprang into sight. The young savages showed him their hands, dabbled in the blood as their mother had promised, and Ieuan's face broke into a smile of gratified hatred. Next he spoke hurriedly and pointed down with his dripping sword. He rushed back into the fight, the others followed, and as they went a pungent smell came to my nostrils.

I started, ran down several steps, and snuffed it up eagerly. Smoke, without a doubt, and not of powder either. I saw faint yellow wreaths curling up from one corner of the hall, and my heart stood still. Fire! the place was on fire, and we were up here, and the lower stairs and the hall impassable, for the fight still raged furiously.

"Siani!" I cried. "Quick! Quick! Run with your things to the room where you kept the window. It is our only chance." I sprang up, swung Enid into my arms and ran as swi.tly as I could. Siani followed me in a moment, loaded down to the ground. We reached the room safely, and drove home the great iron bolt which fastened the door on the inside. I laid my love down and seized the roll of stuff which Siani had brought.

I drew out a yard or two, made the end fast to the strap which joined the saddlebags, and lowered them from the open window. They were soon on the ground, and this side of the house, as usual, was quite deserted. The doors were on the other side and no paths came this way. When I felt the weight of the bags gone by reason of their settling on the turf, I slashed the stuff across with my sword. There was a strip already hanging from the ceiling, knotted round the beam as I had fastenod it in the afternoon. As Siani had cut it across close to the window, the piece left hung nearly to the floor.

I fastened the end of it to the end I had just cut, and we now had a rope to the ground. I pulled several yards more off the roll and made a strong running noose. Meanwhile, Siani was doing her utmost to revive her mistress. I ran across to the door and listened for an instant. The tumult within the house sounded louder than ever, and I smelt the smoke strongly.

"Come, Siani," said I. "We have not a second to lose. We must lower your mistress first for I shall need your aid to lift her through the window and keep the line steady."

I knelt down and arranged the noose carefully round Enid's waist. The broad band held her at once more firmly and more easily than a rope, and I drew it tight and secured it by a knot.

Siani held the line in a grip of iron while I lifted Enid to the window-sill. Then, pressing a kiss on her cold brow, I also seized the linen and we lowered her slowly and carefully.

The slackening of the stuff and Siani's sharp eyes assured us she was safely on the ground, and again the sword grated across the web. Siani bounded out of the

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window and slid nimbly down the line attached to the ceiling.

I followed as soon as I saw her dark figure alight in a heap on the turf. The distance was no more than enough to make my hands burn with the friction of the swift passage and I dropped on my feet like a cat. I found Siani's knife already out and cutting the web from Enid's waist.

As she drew it away I swung up the tall, slender form and made off swiftly up the hill. I ran for perhaps three hundred yards, then stopped. We were clear of the place and I laid Enid on the grass, and Siani, panting up with her load, sprang again to her ministrations. She swept her hands over the grass heavily laden with dew and wetted her mistress's hands and brow. In a few moments a long, fluttering sigh and a slight movement filled us with delight. Then Enid started, and said:

"Oh, where am I?"

"Safe, dearest," I whispered. "Siani and I are here. No one else."

"How did I come here?" she cried. "I must not leave the house. Owain——"

"Look," said I, and took her hand.

From our present position we could see the eastern front of Nant-y-Bryn. A dozen windows had splintered in the heat of the furnace roaring up within, and great clouds of tawny, fire-stained smoke eddied into the night. Then out curled darting tongues of red and yellow flame, leaping higher and higher, and throwing dancing gleams even as far as we stood.

"Fire!" she said. "Nant-y-Bryn is on fire! Oh, my brother. Oh, Owain!" and she wept as if her heart would break.

A knot of yelling figures flew towards us, dark against the fierce red light of the burning house. I drew my sword, and the tinkle of the steel caught Enid's ear. She checked her sorrow with a great effort.

"And I am imperilling your lives," said she, "by indulging in useless grief. Save yourselves."

I returned my sword to its scabbard.

"It is no attack," said I. "'Tis but a clump of fugitives from the house."

Long before the band reached us it melted away, rushing apart from each other, ones and twos scattering in the darkness, screaming women, and shouting men.

I whistled loud and shrilly, Then again and again, but there was no sign of Whitesock.

"She won't be far away, if she's unhurt," said I. Round the south-eastern angle came a band of ponies, galloping, whinnying, throwing up their heels, tossing their manes, and lifting their heads to sniff the smoke. They had been turned on the hillside to graze, and had been attracted and excited by the fire, and were now dashing wildly about the burning house. Cantering easily at their heels came Whitesock. I gave a sigh of relief, and whistled once more. She flew to me straight as an arrow. At sight of the ponies Siani ran towards them at the top of her speed, calling: "Berro! Berro!"

I took the saddle-bags and swung them across Whitesock's quarters, then begged Enid to mount and ride.

"And you?" she asked.

"I intend to walk for the present," I replied. "And at that pace it will be easy for you to sit on my saddle."

I shortened a stirrup to the right length for her, and swung her up. As I did so the soft thud of a pony's feet upon the turf came closer, and up rode Siani, on her brown mountain pony, Berro, whom she had captured from among the herd.

We were now in marching order, and Siani led the way over the open mountain.

"Where away now, Siani?" I asked.

"To Maengwyn," she replied, "about seven miles over the mountain. A good, safe place to stop this night."

"In which direction?"

"To the east," said she.

"Good," I answered, for our future direction must be eastwards, and we pushed on up the long smooth slope. At the crest we paused and looked back. The eastern and southern faces of Nant-y-Bryn were spouting flame at every opening. Every room was panelled and floored with wood, old and dry, and the fire had made swift headway. Good-bye to Nant-y-Bryn! The country about rang with the cries and shouts of the people escaping from that furnace. Of pursuit there was none. As I found afterwards, the Red Men of the Dusk, having broken and scattered their enemies, surrendered themselves to the joy of plundering those parts of the house last reached by the fire.

It was Enid who gave the signal to move. With a last, long look at the grim, old house, now a glowing, fiery blot on the night, and her brother's funeral pyre, she touched the rein and Whitesock stepped forward. Half-a-dozen strides carried us below the ridge, and we were alone in the night.

I walked at the mare's head, and, for the first time in her life, Whitesock marched easily and contentedly with another than myself on her back.

"You see," said I, "this of itself is a good omen. Whitesock understands."

A sudden nickering and whinnying broke out behind us, and Siani's pony answered at once.

"What is that?" I asked.

"It is the grey pony of my mistress," answered Siani. "He is not easy to catch, but he will follow Berro everywhere."

"That's lucky," said I. "We shall be furnished then with mounts, and no more ado. But we'll spend no time with him now. Let him follow to our destination, and it will be easy to take him then."

Within half-an-hour again a red moon came up and put out the stars, and we marched swiftly by her ample light over the dewy grass and by strong hill tracks, until Maengwyn was reached.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Over the Hills to England.

The next morning I awoke just at daybreak, and rolled out of the trusses of hay in which, wrapped in a blanket, I had slept like a king. At the further end of the hayloft the master of Maengwyn and his son snored peacefully. The farmhouse consisted of but one apartment, and had been left to the woman folk. Faint streaks of day showed themselves through the crevices of a shutter at my elbow. I flung it back, and leant out into the cool morning air. What was my next move to be? I drew in deep draughts of the cold, sweet breath of the mountain, and set myself to beat out a safe course for Enid.

"Mistress Whitgift," thought I at last. "'Tis the only sure harbour for her at present."

Mistress Whitgift was Enid's godmother. She was no connection by blood, but had been the bosom friend of Enid's mother. She belonged to an ancient family of Montgomery, and had married over the Marches, her husband having been Aubrey Whitgift, a gentleman of Salop. Aubrey Whitgift was killed fighting under the Earl of Derby at Wigan Lane, and his estates passed to a relative who sided with the opposite party, and his widow was reduced to narrow circumstances. She now lived in a small manor house somewhere between Ludlow and Cleobury Mortimer, and, when first I saw Enid the latter was returning from a visit to Mistress Whitgift.

But the thing craved wary handling. To conduct Enid thither meant to march to a spot within a score of miles of my own countryside, where everyone knew me for a long stretch round. I was just seeing my way through the matter when the door of the house opened, and a grey figure came out.

"No," said I from above. "No; your dark-red riding dress, if you please."

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and "To ride about a wild mountain," said Enid, looking up and meeting my eyes with her sweet, grave smile. "'Tis the only handsome dress I have. And why not homespun?"

"Very well," I replied. "Homespun for to-day if you wish it. But the fitness of things will demand other attire when we get out of the hills if you are to ride Whitesock unnoticed!"

I ran down to her, and we walked out on the hillside, and I told her of what I had been thinking. Mistress Whitgift had been in her mind also, and it was easily agreed between us that she should go there for the present.

"The turn of the tide is coming fast," said I, "and the day will soon dawn when I can walk about openly, and then we will marry and live happy ever after. Meanwhile, you will be safe with Mistress Whitgift."

"But if they seize you before that day dawns," said Enid, drawing a deep breath, "oh, what should I do? Where will you go now for safety?"

"I am coming with you," I replied. "Do you suppose I will leave you until I see you in good hands?"

"With me!" said Enid. "Into the very midst of danger! Did you not say one day that Butley Croft is barely twenty miles from Cleobury Mortimer?"

"I said it," I returned, "and it is true. But within this hour, you shall judge if the clumsy country boor, into which I intend to transform myself, be not a safe companion."

I looked round, and saw Siani at the door, and beckoned her.

"Siani," said I, as she drew near, "the young fellow here is much about my size. Has he a suit of decent homespun to his name?"

"A just new suit," replied Siani. "It iss not two months since Sion Du, the tailor, made them for him. On hiss back, perhaps, twice."

"Well," said I, "take my purse and give him his own price for them. It is useless for me to try and bargain, we cannot talk together."

Siani's keen eye saw my plan at once, and she nodded wisely.

"And the pretty clothes with you now," said Siani. "Will you take them with you?"

"No, no," I answered, "he can have them as well."

"Then it is not sense to give money as well," cried Siani. "No, indeed."

"Give him something, Siani," said I. "After all, it will be very good of him to part with them, if he does."

"If he does," repeated she. "He must!" And away she went.

"Then," I went on, "I shall crop my hair short and shave my face."

"Your hair!" murmured Enid.

"No great harm done," I laughed. "It will grow again, which is more than can be said for my head if that went In short, you will see an orthodox serving-man riding in the train of a charming young lady."

"Oh," she said, and held my hand tightly.

We went back to the house and found the people eager to do everything which lay in their power to help us. Barley bread, milk and oatmeal porridge were now set on the board and we made a hearty breakfast on these simple provisions.

Then, with her own beautiful hand Enid snipped away my flowing brown curls, and next I passed under the hand of my host, for I am no adept at shaving, and he swept off my short beard and moustachios.

Already I looked very different, as all declared, but when I went again to the loft, and shifted my riding dress for a suit of dark blue woollen homespun, worsted stockings, and clumsy shoes, there was a universal cry of astonishment when I returned.

"Not the same, at all," cried Siani, "Not the same indeed!"

"What think you now?" I asked of Enid.

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"You are very greatly changed, I admit," she replied. "But remember you speak of going to a part where people might be met upon whom even this would not prevail."

"At the first opportunity I will add a great black patch," said I. "You know not the virtues of a patch in the way of disguise. I have seen it do wonders again and again. And I am not yet complete."

I clapped on a big slouching felt hat which the young man had given me, and I was assured that I looked my part to a miracle.

The next thing was to prepare for the road, and by good luck the house could fit us with a couple of saddles, one for Enid and one for myself, for my own saddle was altogether out of character for a serving man to bestride, being too costly, and I cheerfully exchanged it for a rude affair upon which the good man of Maengwyn rode to market. Siani went off at full gallop, riding barebacked, to a house some two miles away, and took money to fit herself out, and was back with the pony harnessed within the hour.

There were droves of animals belonging to Nant-y-Bryn pasturing about this part of the mountain, and the son of the house captured us a strong little brown gelding to serve as a pack-horse. He and I fastened the saddle bags carefully upon it, and everything was ready for a start.

It was about ten o'clock when we plunged into a narrow cwm, which took us out of the sight of Maengwyn in less than a hundred yards, and led us north-eastward across the hills.

Enid was riding Whitesock, and I walked at her side, leading the grey pony, who had followed us to Maengwyn the night before. Siani came behind with the baggage-horse.

Again, Whitesock seemed to understand everything. She ambled on as if proud to carry her beautiful burden, and, after walking half-a-mile, I ventured to slip into the saddle and ride the grey beside her.

"Poor creature!" said Enid. "What a shame to torment her when she is so fond of you!"

For Whitesock was now a trifle uneasy, yet calm again when I spoke to her and stroked her neck.

"In five minutes more," said I, "she will be as happy with you as under me."

"Oh, no," said Enid.

"It is true," I returned. "I know her ways well enough to be sure that she has taken to you for good and all."

It was as I said. A few minutes later I fell back into the proper place for a serving man to occupy. Whitesock turned her eye on me, and when she saw I was not leaving the company but following behind, she moved smoothly forward without a fidget.

Much of this, to be sure, was owing to the manner in which she was being ridden. Enid is a born horsewoman, and her hands are perfect.

All day we rode steadily forward, following tracks well known to my companions. A halt of a couple of hours was made in the early afternoon at a shepherd's hut to refresh ourselves and feed and rest the horses, and, as dusk fell, we rode up to an inn, which I recognised as the place where I had failed to find Enid and Siani, and from whence I had ridden at once to take them from the Red Men of the Dusk.

Here my disguise did not profit me much, for the people at once found out I was not what I seemed. They knew Miss Vaughan and her servant well, and took me, at first, for what I looked. But, naturally enough, they spoke to me in the language of the country, and I was gravelled at a word. When they found I did not understand them they became very eager to probe into the mystery, and set a fellow who had a little English to cross-examine me. From this I was saved by the intervention of Siani, and I saw very plainly the use of a laced coat in gaining one civility at an inn.

The next morning we set off at an early hour, and now I knew the track we followed. We called at the house of the woman whose child I had fished out of the swift little brook, and drank warm, new milk with her. She made no sign that she had seen me before, but that was not wonderful, and no severe test of my present guise.

As we rode that afternoon, Enid decided against staying in Rhayader. In the house opposite the inn lived an old servant of the Vaughans, and I should be again exposed to great inquisitiveness.

The Welsh, and in particular the country Welsh, have an intense passion for prying into other people's business, and the figure I cut of a homespun mountaineer with an English tongue in my head would gall their curiosity mightily.

So we took a cast about Rhayader, passing a couple of miles south of the town, and riding slowly along very bad roads to an inn some dozen miles beyond it.

The next morning I rode beside Enid in earnest talk, for that evening would see us at Mistress Whitgift's house, and we had our plans for the future to arrange. What they were it is needless to mention, for they were shaken to pieces that same night by the march of affairs, and others called for at a short notice.

Our midday halt was at Knighton, and here Siani obtained me a great black patch which I clapped over the right side of my face as soon as we were clear of the place. Enid eyed me anxiously, and even her uneasy heart was at rest when she scanned the appearance I now presented.

We rode across the border into South Salop, then across North Hereford, next into Salop again, and so came to Ludlow. We made no stop here, but marched steadily on aiming to get to Mistress Whitgift's house just after nightfall. A thick, misty evening was gathering around us when Enid pointed to a tall stone we were passing, and said: "It is a mile again."

"We have timed ourselves to a wonder," said I, and rode up alongside, for the road was solitary, and the dusk was deepening fast. Soon we came to a white gate and here Enid drew rein. A little further on could be seen the lights of fire and candle in the windows of a little hamlet.

I sprang down and pushed the gate open. We entered an avenue and Enid brought Whitesock to a stand.

"I will go quietly forward," she said, "and see that Mistress Whitgift is somewhat prepared for our arrival. Her health has been feeble this last year or more and I fear now that this will trouble her."

I helped her to descend, and she went swiftly up the avenue, which led through thick shrubbery to a house some forty yards from the road. The place gave no signs of life save for a faint candle shine at one window.

Two, three minutes passed, and a dark figure came towards us.

"Is it William?" asked Siani.

"Ay, ay," replied a man's voice, and then he added in a tone full of caution, "Come quietly."

We moved on, leading the horses slowly, and drew up at a door in the side of the house. The bags were unstrapped from the led pony and carried in, and then we made our way to the stable beyond.

Here was a lighted lantern hanging from a beam, and I saw that my conductor was an old man, his face full of grief. Time after time he sighed heavily as he helped me with the gear, and so uneasy did this make me that in the end I could not help asking him what was the matter. He looked up as if surprised to find I spoke English freely, and replied that his mistress was ill.

"Seriously ill?" I said.

"She'll never see the morn," he replied.

"So near?" I cried.

"So near," he repeated. "For two days past her only wish hath been to see your young mistress, and how it comes she arrives so pat, I know not, but it seems a miracle that my mistress can bid her farewell, as hath been her earnest wish."

I said no more, but went about my work with very serious thoughts. What was to do now with Enid's friend fast slipping away from her?

(To be continued.)

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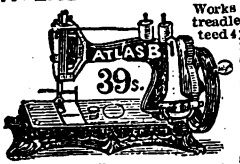

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- ON - THE BEST AUTHORITY.

C. M.—Half a century ago barrel organs were to be heard in many churches. A barrel generally contained eight tunes; not more than four barrels could be got into one organ. The duties of the organist were then manifestly simple—they were confined to turning the handle.

Driver. — German engine - drivers receive a gold medal and £100 for every ten years of service without accident.

L. D.—London eats nearly half a million tons of fish every year.

Ed.—Most Russian newspapers keep "a man of straw" as responsible editor. In return for the use of his name he draws a salary of about £200 a year. In the event of prosecution, the man of straw has to stand fire. If the judgment is against the paper, he has to go to prison. Some time ago, the libel editor of the *Novoe Vremya* was sentenced to four months' imprisonment. It was the first piece of work he had done for some years, although he had been regularly drawing his salary all the time.

G. K.—Twenty-five years ago there roamed over the plains and mountains of the Far West nearly 8,000,000 buffaloes. To-day there are fewer than 600 head of the animal in existence.

Ins.—There are about twenty men to one woman holding life insurance policies.

L. M. wishes to be informed how the picking up of water while a train is moving is accomplished.————The water lies in shallow troughs between the metals. As soon as the engine is over one of these troughs, the driver lowers into it a scoop from the tender. The rush of the train forces the water up the scoop into the tank with such rapidity that the latter is filled in a few seconds. The utmost promptitude must be exercised in withdrawing the scoop when the tank is full, for if this is not done at once the tender may be flooded to such an extent that the fires are put out.

H. O.—At Munich there is a hospital which is chiefly supported by the sale of old steel pen nibs, collected from all parts of Germany. They are made into watch springs, knives, and razors.

S. E.—The torpedo depôt ship *Vulcan* is a veritable box of machinery. In all—reckoning those of the various torpedo-boats and small craft which she carries—she contains ninety-three engines.

H. L.—In the Dominion of Canada alone 900,000 square miles are yet unexplored.

Vision.—The strength of vision in savages proves to be much less extraordinary than was supposed. Dr. Behrheim, on a visit to Johannesburg, has tested the sight of 1,853 Kaffirs, Basutos, Hottentots, Zulus and Bushmen, finding 1,509 with normal vision equal to that in Europeans, 257 with stronger sight, and 87 with weaker. Phenomenal vision was shown by a Kaffir girl of fourteen, who perceived objects at sixty feet away as well as a normal white could at twenty feet.

A. K.—One man in every twenty meets with an accident yearly.

G. R.—It is estimated that the value of salmon and migratory trout taken in English and Welsh waters in an average year is slightly over £150,000.

Point.—It is strange that the use of points for purposes of punctuation should be such a comparatively modern invention. Of the four generally used points, only the period (.) dates earlier than the fifteenth century. The colon (:) is said to have been first introduced about 1485, the comma (,) about 1570. It is difficult to understand how the literary world dispensed for so many centuries with the useful points, and their lack must have added to the toil of the decipherer of written documents. When we remember what curious pervertions of meaning may be caused by the misplacing of a comma we marvel how early authors contrived to escape strange misreading of their works, in which no points guided the students.

J. E.—Seven hundred million oranges are exported every year from Europe to America.

Leaf.—The highest trees have most pointed leaves.

T. K.—It seems that the ladies of the harem possess a wonderful capacity for disposing of sweetstuff. France alone exports to Turkey and Egypt for the harems 1,600,000 francs' (£64,000) worth of various expensive sweets annually.

Tins.—In Paris the thousands of sardine and other tin boxes that are thrown away every month form the basis for an industry which has reached vast proportions. These refuse cans are stamped by machinery into tin soldiers, and sold so cheaply that the poorest children can possess them; yet the manufacturer makes a fair profit, which he could not do if he used new material.

S. P. C. A.—England holds the honour of having first formed societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and of having first legislated for its punishment.

I. C.—Yes. Black ice cream was once tried as a dainty in France. The cream was tinted with the juice of Turkish prunes, and looked more novel than appetising.

Z.—A Brazilian lady never goes shopping. Servants are sent for samples, and if it is a bonnet the senorita wants to buy, a box or basket containing all the latest Parisian styles is sent up for her inspection.

L. T.—The thinnest and at the same time one of toughest, leathers tanned is a frog's skin.

Smoker.—The Hollanders are perhaps of all the Northern peoples the se who smoke the most. The humidity of their climate makes it almost a necessity, and the moderate cost of tobacco with them renders it accessible to all. To show how deeply rooted is the habit, it is enough to say that the boatmen of the *trekschuit*, the aquatic *diligence* of Holland, measures distances by smoking. From here, they say, to such-and-such a place, it is not so many miles, but so many pipes. When you enter a house, after the first salutations, your host offers you a cigar; when you take leave, he hands you another, and often insists upon filling your cigar-case.

Student.—The income of Oxford University is about £70,000.

Colon.—Out of every five emigrants three are males.

T. M.—For its size, Athens possesses the largest number of barristers of any city in the world. There are 750 out of a population of 130,000 inhabitants. Athens, too, is a city of doctors. The University sends out hundreds of barristers and doctors every year. All cannot obtain employment in their professions, and many take to politics.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 544. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 3RD, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

Mrs. PARTINGTON

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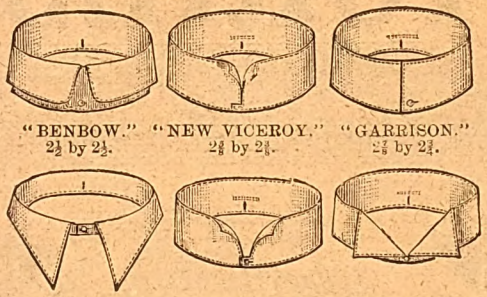

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By E. MILLS.

III.—The Beauty and the Beast.

"Miss Brandon, may I introduce my old friend, Phil North?"

Miss Brandon bowed graciously, and smiled assent.

Mr. North also bowed. He had his programme in his hand, and moved a little nearer as he said:

"May I have the pleasure of a kiss?"

He watched her gravely as he said it, with his dark eyes, whose expression had been pronounced "bold" by more than one observer, although he would himself have been utterly astonished had anyone told him so.

He was astonished to see the wave of colour that dyed the girl's fair flower-like face, and the blaze of indignation that flared up in her blue eyes.

"Certainly not," she said drawing herself to her full height, which was not inconsiderable, and, sweeping aside her shimmering satin skirts with a quick gesture, she turned her back on the two men, and left the verandah with the air of a tragedy queen.

"What the dickens do you mean?" gasped the big man, who was responsible for the situation.

"What the dickens does she mean?" answered North, who was a little man, and, like most little men, had a temper of his own.

"Well, a fellow does not usually ask for a kiss the moment he is introduced to a girl, and such a girl, too. Why, man, you should think yourself lucky to get near her at all to-night."

"Did I ask for a kiss? Well, I meant a dance, though she looks kissable enough, in all conscience."

The big man, whose name was Redwood, laughed.

"Don't excuse yourself to her that way, Phil. She's not of quite the same pattern as most of the women here, brought up amongst the highly respectable section of Sydney society, and not long from school. But my own opinion is that you won't get the chance to explain. Girls of her age are always on their dignity. I've the next dance with her, so I'll leave you to think it out."

North lit a cigar, and strolled to his old place in the shadow of the grape vines. He had been standing there for a good half-hour watching the dancers, until Redwood discovered him, and brought about his introduction to Eve Brandon.

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The girl had moved to the end of the verandah, and had been standing quite close to him, although she was unaware of the fact.

It was a warm night, and the breeze, laden with the scent of sweet night-blooming flowers and the freshness of the great scrubs over which it had come, was welcome to them both. The man from his shadowy corner could see how it ruffled the little curls on her forehead. He was so close that he could mark the rise and fall of the filmy laces round her throat; so close that he could smell the fragrance of the wild jasmine at her breast. And then—well, after all, Phil North was a man, and a young and strong one, and, truth to say, the thought had entered his mind that this was a case to suit the poet who wrote—

> "A man had given all other bliss,
> And all his worldly worth for this,
> To waste his whole heart in one kiss
> Upon her perfect lips."

But he had no idea of that thought's tenacity, or that it would insist upon expression in the way it had done.

They were both guests at Werrima Station for a week's fun and picnic races, but he had not had an opportunity of being introduced to her until the evening, and, now that the desired introduction had come off, he had (as he ruefully expressed it) "upset the apple-cart properly this time."

Eve, on her part, was just as disgusted. She had noticed the ugly, clever-looking little man all day, and had heard a good deal about him that interested her in one way and another, and now to find him so "impossible" was disappointing, to say the least.

"I suppose the 'champagne cup' is to blame, it seems to be the excuse for everything here," she thought. "But I thought he looked different. At any rate, I shall never on earth speak to or notice the awful man again. I wonder what Marion sees in him?"

Marion Hill, hostess and prime mover in all the merriment of Werrima race week, however, seemed to think a good deal of Philip North. She was a handsome, graceful woman, with dreamy, heavy-lidded, eyes, the

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wife of the popular manager of Werrima. They had no children, a fact which did not disturb either of them, and, indeed, children would have been very much out of place at Werrima, especially during race week, when the house was given over to riotous enjoyment, and the stables to strange, satin-skinned horses, and the hours before midnight to dancing and flirtation, and the hour after midnight to billiards, betting, and whisky.

Eight years ago Marion Wade had married Charlie Hill for love, against her parents' wishes, it was said. She had money of her own, and as he managed a station for an English baronet, with more money and faith than experience, life went very smoothly indeed. How much love remained it was hard to say, but the spirit of good fellowship was apparently unbroken; he went his way and she went hers, and both flirted often and lightly, and were all the more pleasant to meet in consequence.

It was quite a settled thing that during each race week Marion should have as *attaché* the most desirable man at these yearly gatherings; equally a settled thing that the coveted position was never held two years running by the same man. Thus people had wondered not a little to see Phil North attendant cavalier again this year.

As a fact Phil liked this clever, bright hostess immensely, all the more so that she was apparently cold-hearted, and did not expect too much sentiment from her friends. She was a clever woman, and knew how far to take the rope allowed her by a world which is inclined to be lenient to beauty, combined with wealth and the power of amusing this same world.

But, quick as Phil was to read character in most cases, he failed to see the depths in one clear, apparently shallow stream, failed to see that Marion had buried one love, had discovered one idol's feet of clay long ago, and that her starved heart was rapidly enthroning another in its place—shyly, and perhaps scarcely acknowledged to herself.

He came quickly to her, racquet in hand.

The evening before the race day she was chatting to Eve, and resting in a long, low chair by her open bedroom window.

Out on the lawn four men, including her husband and Philip North, were playing tennis. Mr. Redwood was lounging about smoking and picking up balls.

"Has he proposed yet?" said Marion, indicating with a wave of her white, much-beringed hand the burly form of the tennis scout.

Eve blushed. It was an open secret that the young squatter was over head and ears in love with her, an equally open secret that she was skilfully fencing off his declaration, for Miss Brandon hated scenes.

"Charlie wanted to bet me last night that he had managed it while he tightened your horse's girths for you yesterday," continued Marion, "but I see it is a joy to come yet. Why are you going to refuse him? He is well off and good-looking."

"Not so good-looking as your husband is, Mrs. Hill," answered the girl, trying to divert the conversation. "How well he looks at tennis too. I suppose you are very proud of him?"

"Oh! very."

Marion's answer might have meant anything. What it did mean was that the husband of her love and trust was dead long ago, and she had no interest whatever in this selfish, cold man who had emerged, phœnix-like, from the ashes of lost illusions.

"You are hard to please," she continued after a pause. "None of the men here seem to find favour in your sight. Most women like Mr. North, for instance, and you are scarcely civil to him. Why is it?"

Eve moved uneasily in her lounge chair. "I don't know," she stammered. "He is so ugly, and I hate ugly people near me, and he is so insignificant I quite forget he is here at all."

"Yes, he is ugly," said her hostess musingly, "but he has a very gentlemanly 'back,' and he is the last person one would dream of describing as 'insignificant.' That is only a poor reason. Please don't 'wriggle' so, it does not suit your 'long loveliness.' Only little women can wriggle with impunity."

"Then, perhaps, it is because he does not like me."

"Are you sure of that?"

Miss Brandon blushed again.

When Mrs. Hill did open those heavy-lidded eyes of hers to their full extent, their gaze was wonderfully alert and penetrating.

"Quite sure," she said. "Besides, he never looks at any of us girls when you are by."

"He is a very old friend of mine, Eve; but all men like to make new friends sometimes. I fancy still that you two have something between you. Have you ever met before? Now, child, confess?"

Her manner and words were playful, but her wonderful eyes seemed to demand and command an answer. Hers was the stronger will, so Eve answered truthfully.

"If you must know, then, there is a reason, and a very good one, which causes me to hate, and loathe, and despise him, even if he is your friend."

Marion laughed. "There, there, do not get so excited, no man is worth extremes of love or hate, especially on such a hot day as this. Run away, pretty one, or you will be late for dinner. I see the men have finished, and are departing to the bathing pool."

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But as Eve left the room, the other woman said to herself, "Methinks you protest too much, my friend." Then she stepped to the French window, and called, "Phil."

He came quickly to her, racquet in hand.

"You will drive me to-morrow, as usual?" she said.

"Of course, Marion, if you will have me. I shall be only too delighted."

"We start rather earlier than the others as I must see about the picnic baskets. Mr. Redwood is driving Miss Brandon. He means to put his fate to the touch tomorrow. They will make a handsome couple."

She watched his square-jawed, clean-shaven face intently. Was it only gathering dusk that put that shadow in his deep, brown eyes (they were the only good feature he had).

"Undoubtedly," he said. "I thought Redwood had it badly. Ah, well! he would not be the first heart lost at Werrima races. Remember we had two engagements as a result last year."

"You speak feelingly. One would almost think you had lost your heart."

The blood rushed to his face.

"Have you lost it, Phil?" she said softly.

He looked her straight in the face.

"Yes," he said simply, "I have; and you know it, Marion, as you know most things."

"I!" she faltered. "Why should I know, Phil?"

"Coming for a swim, old man?"

Charlie Hill's deep voice drowned her low question as he came towards them, and leant against the window tugging at his moustache, with a quizzical look in his narrow blue eyes.

"Directly," said Phil; "when I have got rid of my racquet," and taking off his hat to Marion, he walked away.

Marion closed the windows with a bang, and while Mr. Hill waited for their mutual friends, his thoughts seemed to be pleasant, for he laughed to himself once or twice.

"The fact is," he said half-aloud, "Marion is inclined to make an ass of herself, and I'm not inclined for law courts and sentiment. It's about time to settle things. If that pretty fool Eve Brandon was not so devilish proud and school girlish, things might safely be let alone. As it is, Charlie Hill will take the rôle of good angel to a deserving couple, and Phil shall have his chance to-morrow; he's got too much at stake to miss it."

Then he laughed.

"And Marion thought he meant her. Good Lord! but it is rich."

* * * * *

The Werrima Amateur Race Club had a fine day for their races, although it was a trifle hot, and so all the more suitable to the white frocks worn by the majority of the women.

The driving arrangements were in the hands of Mr. Hill, and so Redwood was fain to bow to his decision that he was only to have the joy of taking Miss Brandon to, not from, the races. In fact, Redwood implied that he himself would bring her back.

"She's the prettiest girl here, and it's about my turn, you know," he said.

Redwood felt that such a chance must not be wasted, and poor Eve had an anxious time striving to ward off the proposal which threatened to "break out" every moment. She chattered gaily all the way—about the races chiefly—and showed a consuming thirst for

The bough had come down, striking the back of the buggy.

information in the minutest details. She made him listen to the histories of her various school friends. She gave him an exhaustive recipe for Indian chutney; and in fact, never allowed him to get within an inch of dangerous ground, although he was stupid and persistent with all the obstinacy of a one-idea'd man.

Once at the course matters were easier. Her buggy was soon surrounded, and Redwood was obliged to leave to ride in the race for the Ladies' Bracelet. His horse came in second to Charlie Hill's Mazeppa, ridden by its owner. Very handsome Marion Hill's husband looked in his blue and gold. Eve could not help contrasting him with Phil North.

"He looks like a horrid little jockey," she thought. "I suppose he does ride well, as everyone says so; but he is 'horsey' enough, at any time, with his clean-shaven face and heavy jaw."

She must have spoken her last thoughts aloud, for Redwood, who was standing near, made answer:

"No, I don't think North does look his best in silk; but he's a tip-top rider, though he was beaten for the Bracelet. Just wait and see him in the Hurdle Race. He's bound to pull that off. It comes on after lunch. But I have something to say to you, Miss Brandon—Eve."

"For goodness' sake make up a sweep on this next race, Mr. Redwood. I feel I shall be lucky, and I have lost steadily all day. I will run across to Marion and see if she will join." Springing lightly from her seat Eve walked to the big drag, where most of the ladies were stationed.

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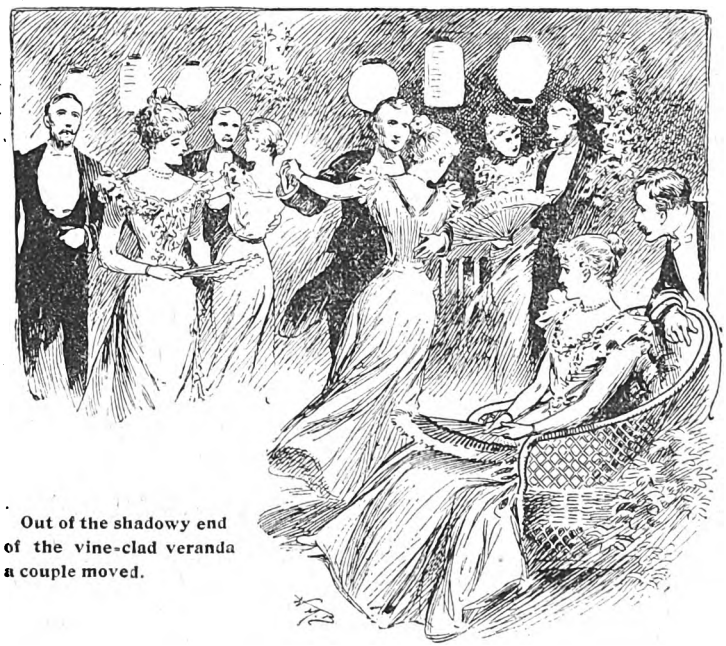
Mr. Redwood began to wonder if that "daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair," was not a little bit deaf! The Hurdle Race was the last event, and the most exciting. North got well away with his big chestnut, but at the last hurdle his horse fell, and Eve screamed for it seemed to her that the whole field had raced over him. Everyone seemed to be running to the rails, only she could not move or speak, until Redwood broke from the crowd and came towards her with the words, "He's not hurt, just a bit shaken and bruised and a few cut fingers—wonderfully narrow escape; the black mare's hoofs were within an ace of his skull. Hill is riding to win now; the Werrima stables are in luck today. Were you frightened, Miss Brandon?"

"No; at least, yes. No one likes to see an accident How white Mrs. Hill looks; she must be on tenterhooks until the day is over, and her husband is safe. I hope I shall not marry a man who races!"



Out of the shadowy end of the vine-clad veranda a couple moved.

Redwood smiled under his heavy moustache at Eve's sympathy for Mrs. Hill, but he kept his thoughts to himself, and looking round discovered that he was alone with the girl, and, moreover, that the accident had unnerved her and stopped her flow of words.

"I would give up racing if you said the word," he began, and then and there laid his heart and fortune at her feet.

Eve was obliged to refuse a lover and lose a friend. He had such a good idea of his attractions that it took some time to convince him, and Eve was glad when Mr. Hill cantered up with the words, "We must make a bee line for home; a real wild storm is brewing; the black boy is bringing your horses, Redwood; you had better go down to the creek and lend a hand."

Redwood withdrew sulkily, and Eve said, "Oh, can't I go with Mrs. Hill or the girls?"

"It's all right, Miss Brandon, you shall have another driver; it's all settled, but I must be off to the slip-rails. Lance has all he can do with the four greys."

He cantered off after the drag, which was just disappearing over the rise.

Redwood put in the horses, and then handed Eve the reins.

"Good-bye, Miss Brandon," he said. "You have doubtless heard that you are to have a more welcome driver. He is at present washing the mud off his face at the creek. Here, Sampson, bring me my horse." And the boy brought up the chesnut. Mr Redwood flung himself into the saddle, and galloped off at a breakneck pace after the last cloud of dust on the ridge.

Eve gazed helplessly round, a sudden dread at her heart. It could not be. Yes, it was Phil North walking slowly from the creek, intent upon twisting a handkerchief round the fingers of his left hand.

"He has done it on purpose," she thought, but changed her mind when she saw his startled face.

"You," he cried. "I beg your pardon, Miss Brandon. I had no idea of this. If you prefer to go yourself I can easily walk to the station, it is only four miles."

Eve glanced at the black west. "Of course we must carry out Mr. Hill's arrangements," she said. "We need not speak at all. In fact, I prefer silence when I am driving."

Phil looked at the gathering storm, and decided to put his pride in his pocket.

"I also think that under certain circumstances silence is golden," he said. "I know you drive well, which fact no doubt accounts for Hill's arrangement, although my hand looks worse than it is."

And he got in beside her. Eve set her lips, and sent the bays off at a sharp pace. The journey would not last long if she could help it!

The storm was dreadfully close. Twice Phil looked back uneasily. He calculated that it would overtake them in the ring-barked timber of the home paddock, and the prospect was not pleasant. The horses were becoming restive at the sound of the dull roar behind them, and Phil looked at the girl's slender white wrists, and said:

"Let me take the reins for a time. Rob Roy is a beggar to pull."

"I prefer to drive," said Miss Brandon freezingly. A few minutes afterwards they entered the ring-barked paddock, and, as North expected, the storm burst on them in all its fury. It began with a vivid flash of lightning, to play and dance about the plated parts of the harness. Eve did what Marion Hill would never have done—dropped the reins, and covered her eyes from the blinding glare with her hands.

Phil caught the reins, and steered the horses skilfully back to the road.

"Put that shawl thing round your head," he shouted as the biting, blinding rain deluged them. Eve obediently discarded her sopping chiffon hat, and tied the shawl round her face, now white and drawn with fear.

The wind was tearing off limbs of the dead trees, so that Phil had his work cut out to get a road for the trap.

At one part trees were down on both sides, and the saplings were too thick to allow the buggy off the track.

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Straight above hung a big limb, swaying at every blast of the wind. Phil thought he heard a crack, but there was no going back.

"Here's for it," he shouted. "Hold on to me, Miss Brandon."

Eve held on, clasping his shoulder with both hands.

She never knew quite what happened next. There seemed to be a general mix up of rotten wood, blinding rain, and fearful jolts. The bough had come down striking the back of the buggy, and in consequence the, horses were off, with the bits in their teeth, dragging the whole over everything. She knew that Phil had thrown his arm round her for one thing, and for another that she had hidden her face in his shoulder. Then he took his arm away, and was engaged in mastering the horses. The danger was nearly over now, for the flying storm had passed on, and the horses were steadying as they dashed out of the timber on to an open road.

Then she knew that Phil was soothing and comforting her. Miss Brandon was crying like a frightened child.

As they drew up at the slip-rails he looked down at the drenched figure.

Of her face he could only see one smooth white cheek and the curve of a little ear, round which the rain-wet curls clung pathetically. It brought back that warm night a week ago when he had watched the same little curls ruffled by the breeze, and had thought strange thoughts about the haughty young beauty.

"Eve," he said; "Eve."

What was there in his deep tones that brought the blood surging back to her face? She looked up with startled wide blue eyes, the tear-drops still clinging to the long lashes.

"Eve," he said, half tremulously, half playfully, "may I have the pleasure of a kiss?"

And Eve did not say "Certainly not" this time.

Some hours afterwards, when the Werrima house-party was ending up the festivities with a dance on the ve anda, a man sat down to the piano and struck up "Bitter-Sweet."

Marion Hill was standing near, looking listless and bored, but at the opening bars of the waltz a quick light came into her dreamy eye.

"He always dances this one with me," she murmured; "always."

Out of the shadowy end of the vine-clad veranda a couple moved. The man slipped his arm round the girl's waist, and they glided away to the music's plaintive sweetness.

As they passed Marion saw that the man was Phil North, and that his plain face was all aglow, with the light that never was on land or sea.

A rush of blinding tears dimmed her eyes; but no one saw them fall, for Marion Hill was a brave woman and had known the bitterness of lost illusions before.

The man at the piano played well. He glided now from the "Bitter-Sweet" to "Never Again," and these were the waltz tunes that Marion hated all through the long life that was before her.

Old Bullion: "What! You wish to marry my daughter? She is a mere schoolgirl yet."

Suitor: "Yes, sir, I came early to avoid the rush."

Mother: "I wonder what makes that dog afraid of me? He always behaves as if he thought I was going to kill him."

Little Daughter: "I expect he's seen you whipping me."

Old Lady (compassionately): "Poor fellow! I suppose your blindness is incurable. Have you ever been treated?"

Blind Man (sighing): "Yes, mum, but not often. 'Tain't many as likes to be seen goin' into a public-house with a blind beggar."

Artist: "Oh! you think the background's 'beastly,' do you? Perhaps the cattle are 'beastly,' too, though I flatter myself ——"

Friendly Artist: "Oh, no, my dear fellow! That's just what they are not."

That Would Never Do.—"There is one great objection to electing women as representatives of the people."

"What is that?"

"Complications would arise should they pair with the masculine members."

A far-sighted miss of seventeen summers has concluded to marry a big man for her first husband, and a little one for the second, so that she can cut the clothes of the first down and make them over to his successor. Thus the hard times force home lessons of rigid economy and practical sense upon tender childhood.

THE LAST OF CAPTAIN KETTLE.

The last recorded adventure of Captain Kettle appears in the June number of Pearson's Magazine, now on sale. The last adventure is even more exciting than those which have gone before, and tells of the strange fate that ultimately befell the intrepid little Captain.

In the June Pearson's there will be found also, among other interesting features,

"Ballooning After Shooting Stars,"

A graphic description of the strange experiences that befell a party of French astronomers, who ascended in a balloon to make observations of shooting stars in November last. The article is illustrated with some remarkable sketches, made by the Painter-in-Chief of the French Society of Aerial Navigation, which give a good idea of life above the clouds.

"Side-Lights on Convict Life,"

An account of a visit to Parkhurst, Isle-of-Wight, the convict convalescent home. This article is illustrated with a remarkable series of photographs, shewing convicts working on the prison farm, where they make hay and tend the pigs and cows, and generally lead a healthy, out-door life.

"Torpedoes Steered by Light,"

Is another interesting article in the June Pearson's, describing a marvellous new invention, by which it is possible to steer torpedoes and other crafts solely by rays of light, without any visible material connection between the steersman and the craft controlled.

Altogether, in the June Pearson's, there are seven complete stories and nine articles, profusedly illustrated throughout by photographs, paintings, and the work of the first black-and-white artists of the day.

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The Flower of His Race.

"MADAME, your son will never be a man."

"Monsieur, he will be a noble one."

"I ask if it is possible that a boy—a boy of twelve—should have hair like that—a girl's *coiffure?*"

"It shall be cut if you wish it."

"And that velvet suit and that lace collar; he is a mere doll!"

"He is dressed as becomes his rank."

"And he is as pious as a—as a——"

"Stop, Henri! Your ancestor, Enguerand le Brave, was more so."

As she pleaded for the child's faith a quicker flash came into the child's eyes—those wonderful French eyes that are serious and gay, spiritual and dreamy, bright, yet tender. With her lig t *fichu* and fine delicate features, she resembled some soft miniature of a woman who was of the old *régime.*

Her husband evidently belonged to the same period in attachment.

The semblance of a *jabot* beneath his clean-shaved, aristocratic chin spoke clearly of his tastes.

His character went further back; it had originated twelve hundred years ago with the race of lofty-souled heroes.

He believed himself possessed of the identical nature of his forefathers, but time brings modifications, and psychology is full of nice problems.

D'Artagnan de Chancy de St. Luc was a *savant*, which Enguerand the Crusader had not been; he despised effeminacy, yet his great-grandfather had shone as the most graceful and accomplished profligate of his time.

He said his son should be a soldier and an academician, a knight and a scholar, clad in steel and in satin, the flower of his race, the flower of the stock.

The boy was playing upon the lawn. His parents sat in the open window in the quaint *salon* of their chateau.

This was no grim dungeon. The ancestral home had been burnt down at the invasion of the province, so the family retired to a modest country seat, but there was something to tell dead tales in each cheerful room.

The proud escutcheon of the D'Artagnan was in the centre of the wood mosaic floor; the miniatures collected in the gold and velvet *étagère* were family relics—portraits of men and woman who had moved meteor-like in the brilliant courts of France; pastels, pale and old-fashioned, hung in the frames of last century; everywhere a fragrance of musty, sweet mementoes, a veritable perfume of the past.

Out in the sunshine the boy was running against the wind, his hair blown back, his eyes laughing. The dainty feet scarce touched the grass as he flew swiftly on.

"There, Madame, look! he is a perfect baby! And when it thunders he turns pale."

"He is very young; he will outgrow his nervousness; it is not fear."

"He has no character, no ambition; he will be what our neighbours call a 'milksop.'"

Madame de St. Luc coloured faintly with a glow that was more bloom than blush. These constant reprovals vexed and wearied her. Passionately fond of his son, the old no' leman seemed to have but one way of showing his tenderness—harassing, endless recriminations at everything the boy said or did.

"He is far from perfect," she rejoined (though in the depth of her mother's heart she wondered what he lacked), "but he has sterling qualities. Did he ever tell a lie?"

"A lie, Madame! A D'Artagnan lie! He will be a peer of France!"

As the brown eyes met the grey ones it would be difficult to measure the pride of that double glance; but the woman, from her vast experience of the world, seemed to add that the reason was not insufficient.

"One of the fifty; there are only fifty of us," murmured the peer, stroking his chin. "And he shall be more besides—orator, statesman."

"Henri, you forget!"

"Marie Therese, I forget nothing. What is the present disorder of things? The king is dead; but my son shall shine in whatever line he chooses. He shall be first—first, you understand—none above him. His ancestors have held throne and State in check; he shall not be less than they. We must marry him well, *ma chere*; our line must never end."

The woman sat with her white hands folded; occasionally the taper fingers twitched,

She was looking at the long row of bouleaux, fretting by the riverside, the apple trees with their September fruit ripe on the straggling boughs, the smooth green, the child at play. A ray like unceasing sunlight shone about his head.

He came and stood before her, his oval face alight with the exhilarating flush of health and motion, his large eyes sparkling, his joyous lips parted for speech or smile—and she forgot all else.

He was her son, her best beloved, her own.

She called him tenderly, "Loulou," and he lifted his brow to be kissed.

What was the world to her?

How distant is that period! How colourless and dim are the trifling scenes in the light of their long, long ago! Turning over these reminiscences, they exhale a faint, dusty odour, like the leaves of some aged book.

Yet the d y made a mark in three lives.

D'Artagnan proceeded to compile a treaty upon theoretic education as a guide to his son's tutors. Louis was to be what no other ever had been before—perfect in every branch—a prodigy of mental and physical health and agility.

It would all come in time if his rules were diligently followed, and the Duke spared no labour, no pains, grinding out his own life in the endeavour to render the boy faultless.

Madame de St. Luc cut the child's beautiful hair with her own hands. It hangs still in a carved frame on the faded wall.

To Louis in particular, the day remained memorable.

He was, to his great joy, delivered of his capillary torment, and his father, upon congratulating him, gravely bade him leave play and seriously think of manhood. The latter word meant little to the candid mind, but the first cloud loomed in the bright life with the former part of the injunction. Henceforth the golden hours were less sweet.

Two preceptors divided morning and noon into regular

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periods for various studies, dogging his every step. Riding, fencing, dancing, all were cultivated; he had very little recreation of a lighter sort.

It was scarcely a happy life, but despite overwork and forced mental application, it seemed as though in the exceptionally gifted boy D'Artagnan's theories were realised.

At eighteen years of age the young Prince of La Pheridiere was delivered to a travelling tutor, sound in every limb and organ, light and well turned, unusually well read, dexterous in manly sports, and fitted for any career. On his return from his travels he was to enter the *grand monde* in Paris and decide in what line he would be glorious—for glorious he must be; his birth, his name, his position infallibly required it.

D'Artagnan, more white, more bent, more steeped in blind ambition, still repeated to the patient woman at his side:

"The flower of his race, Madame, the flower of his race. What can he not attain?"

To her he was still Loulou, only Loulou—a mere child.

She knew him better than did his father; all the learning, all the skill lavished upon him left him unconscious of his worth and simple as when he frolicked in the sunny garden.

News came unfrequently from the travellers. Louis was at Antwerp, Louis was at Leipsic, Louis was in Switzerland, he crossed the Alps, and Madame grew anxious, for Italy was then in a state of political fermentation which threatened a crisis. Then followed a long interval during which no letter came; then the storm burst over the peaceful chateau.

The tutor reappeared alone; his charge had enlisted in the Zouaves.

D'Artagnan was beside himself, raging and fuming. He had never expected this.

Madame, with brave, unflinching brow and proud grace, said she was glad. Her boy was proving himself what she had dreamed him to be. Was not the Pontiff's cause a crusade which Enguerand himself might not have disdained?

Then St. Luc was pacified, and the two aged hearts beat in unison fast and strong in the glory of their son's decision. He had but done what the flower of the nobility were doing all over France.

With the morrow came mortal terrors to quench the mother's enthusiasm; the father, lost anew in his castle building, muttered more than once:

"He will rise, he will rise! Commander-in-Chief of the Pontifical Forces. Yes, I should like that."

Neither knew how the boy had presented himself at all in the crowd of volunteers, with no recommendation save his fine, high-bred face, and the courage in his eyes.

He had given his name, "Louis D'Artagnan," and was serving in the grey jacket under an Irish corporal.

Weeks elapsed. From time to time he wrote home. His father eagerly read those bright short missives.

"A splendid career, Marie Therese—splendid! He will surpass his ancestors after all."

The mother prayed he might be kept from harm and bloodshed. Together they scanned the papers for any items concerning the troubles in Italy. When the critical position of the Pope or fresh outbreaks were mentioned, St. Luc grew angry and Madame trembled.

The peer marvelled that his son, who would be one of the fifty, and so important a personage, was never named.

Then the fighting began. The Zouaves were ordered to the front.

Gaily they marched, for soldiers must rejoice when they fight, when they fall. Perhaps among the merriest beneath the waving glory of the Papal flag—that brave, staunch flag which has wrung the deepest throbs from hearts of steel—was the boy whose nimble feet beat time to the martial strain.

That campaign, brief and glorious, is chronicled in history.

On the eve of the battle—why mention the date? All the world knows it—the Zouaves, kneeling upon the earth which was soon to be moistened with their blood, confessed their sins, and at dawn, with the awakening universe for a sanctuary, received the Blessed Eucharist.

Drawn up in proud array they witnessed the beginning of hostilities. The Italian troops opened fire.

The Pontifical troops responded, advancing beneath the volley.

Men fell, but the ranks closed up—grim, unmoved. Bravely up the hill they went, as though before them was glory, not death. To right, to left, the enemy's wings descend surrounding the gallant host they outnumber by thousands. The leaders behold the peril of that calculated attack. There was but one way to save the army.

"*Zouaves en avant!*"

With a mighty shout, forward spring the Zouaves.

Beneath the impetuous rush of the gaitered feet the earth seems to quiver; the lightning of the fixed bayonets flashes from rank to rank.

Onward they fly!

The immense living barrier at last breaks and recedes.

There was one who fought with the desperate intoxication of old blood warmed like old wine; one whose name has been as a shield at the elbow of kings upon every battlefield of France.

At the onset he had prayed through his clenched teeth half child, half soldier. Then the magic word, like bugle-call, rang out, and each man was a hero.

"*Zouaves en avant!*"

Breathless, with blazing eyes, La Pheridiere had joined in the magnificent charge. Wounded, he fought on; perchance he did not fall; yet later a shot felled him.

Raising himself upon one knee—he could not stand—he called to his comrades to set him on his feet, but they tore on.

As he struggled, a sabre gash across the forehead sent him reeling. Man after man stepped upon or leaped over his body in one whirling avalanche up the incline.

The conflict waxed furious.

Out-numbered—not out-fought—for one instant, the Zouaves tottered.

Then the trumpets sounded and from the plain came the French to the rescue.

They had long waited the summons and swept over the volunteer forces with mad, reckless bravery, trampling the dead and wounded. With them went the roar of the battle, the whizzing bullet, the shouts that encourage and electrify.

It was the *furia francese*, which has never been known to fail.

On the heights musketry rattled, shot answered shot. French cries answered and drowned the Italian ones. Behind, fainter and fainter grew the din of strife.

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Battery smoke hung dark and low, filling the air with the smell of gunpowder—that close, penetrating smell that at once stifles and makes the heart beat with quicker throb. In the gruesome silent howls of anguish are broken by deep-drawn groans and the blasphemy of unbelieving lips; often is a prayer sobbed out. Scattered hither and thither, broken and twisted, lie the weapons that have done the fell work. Inextricably entangled, living and dead stretched out together, sometimes the former are crushed beneath the weight of the latter. Everywhere are death gurgles and contortions and frightful agonies, all the glamour gone, only the veritable sickening horror left. It is good that no mother comes to the battlefields of men.

Where he had fallen Louis d'Artagnan remained. He could not move. Occasionally a moan broke from the colourless lips. Bare-headed, disfigured, his face stained with dust and sweat and blood, it would have been difficult to recognise the blithe, handsome boy. Every limb ached with fever and intense pain.

Night came on, increasing the terror of the ghastly scene, moulding into one dark mass of suffering the separate groups of fearful, helpless actors. The cold stiffness of the wind which blows at the twelfth hour roused La Pheridiere from his stupor.

He endeavoured to raise his head.

Opening his large, dull eyes, which but a while ago had flashed heroic fire, he looked around in the dim light upon the deformity of distorted bodies and rigid countenances.

"Jesus, mercy!" he muttered, and then sank back, dizzy, exhausted. "Water!—I thirst."

He was lying in the dust and glory of a great battle, but he only felt the pangs of his own human, excruciating sufferings.

"Comrade, your hand," implored a man at his elbow. "They have shot my eyes out. I cannot see you. I thing I am going."

D'Artagnan raised himself, his features soothed like those of some pitying angel, and pressed the coarse peasant hand in his.

"Friend, I am here!" he murmured, in his quiet, tender voice.

"It is good to know someone is near. Oh, my head, my head."

With an effort that had made his blood to flow afresh La Pheridiere feebly drew off the dear jacket he had been so proud of—and pushed it gently under the Zouave's head.

"Say," whispered the palsied lips, "the names of the little ones at home—I can't remember."

Louis closed his eyes; he had never known, but believed, he, too, had forgotten. The grip of the callous fingers grew tighter upon his own.

"The prayer my mother taught me," murmured the soldier.

By divine intuition rose the pure, calm tones of the boy's voice.

"*Ave Maria gratia plena!*" and at the end: "Now—at the hour of our death—adieu!"

Around the two silence seemed to grow deeper. Further off shrieked an Italian in the last throes of death.

D'Artagnan fell heavily upon his side; the crouched figure seemed to encircle him and dance, pointing and leering at him. The wheels of a great mill revolved upon the axle of his brain, water roared and tumbled in his ears. Then there stood the long row of silvery, fluttering bouleaux, the apple trees at home. He was running swiftly upon the lawn, his foot so light! and the grass was covered thick with daisies, like white snow flakes.

His father looked out, bidding him leave play and be a man, but his voice was kind and he smiled at the laughing velvet-clad peer. The young, tremulous voice rang out, and with fearful joy, with fearful anguish, imploringly over the hideous pain, "Maman! Maman!"

He ran to her through the little, sweet flowers. She pushed back his hair, the tumbled, golden hair she used to love, and kissed him a long, soft kiss upon the brow. It eased the pain of the burning wound, but her tears fell on his cheeks, and he awoke shivering in the heavy dew.

Dawn lighted the sky and earth, making the world like some grand new creation, where trouble and sorrow are unknown; it showed up in weird relief the aspect of the graveless cemetery; it shone upon the smooth, boyish head, about which the unrisen sun seemed already to glow.

D'Artagnan turned. He felt strong, he felt well; then, suddenly, he gasped, his eyes opened wide—wide as though in the roseate east some glad, startling scene had greeted him.

He alone heard the solemn roll-call; as a soldier ready to obey, he cried:

"Christ, my Captain, I come, I come!"

Oddly enough, he was found without a coat. No one could explain it. He was lying forward with his seraph-like countenance concealed upon his chest, suspended by a gold chain were the medals of the Immaculate Conception and of his First Communion.

They buried him there among his brothers-in-arms—a hurried, obscure resting-place, meet for soldiers, where words of praise and tears of women do not fall.

None will find the exact spot—no stone keeps their names—but in the record of the living dead no one will be lost.

On the daily sheet, numbered among the slain, was the name of Louis D'Artagnan de Chancy, Prince de la Pheridiere.

In the quiet chateau, where the scent of roses made life pleasant and cock-crow was the loudest sound, the list was read.

The Peer fell forward on the printed page—as his son had fallen, the mother's heart, breaking, made no sound.

All was serene and peaceful as before.

For years St. Luc lived on, hale and unsuffering, the ghost of a woman moving patiently by his side.

"When La Pheridiere returns, Madame, I will present him to the King, and his Majesty will certainly appoint him Grand Marshal of France. He shall hold the kingdom in the hollow of his hand—yea, in the hollow of his hand! Did you say he has returned yet, Marie Therese? Oh, he will soon come—very soon. Let us find him a wife, *ma chère*, that the line may be be placed out of all peril of extinction; it must not end—it cannot end! He is the flower of his race—the flower—*n'est ce pas?*"

Morning and night she kisses some poor, discoloured hair in a priceless frame. She never speaks of him. Only sometimes in sleep she calls him softly, pitifully, lingering over each syllable, as though it would give back something to her love.

"Loulou! Loulou!"

Flies have crawled over the glass in the dark, unventilated boudoir. The Peer and Madame are both dead, and the chateau is closed; it has past into strangers' hands.

JOHN HARROD.

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100,000 PRIZES.

A PRIZE FOR EVERY COMPETITOR.

1	Prize of	ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.
1	„	FIFTY POUNDS.
1	„	TWENTY POUNDS.
5,000	Prizes of	Handsome Watches.
5,000	„	Ladies' Companions.
5,000	„	Sporting Knives.
5,000	„	Hair Brushes.
5,000	„	Hand Mirrors.
5,000	„	Silver Brooches.
5,000	„	Gold-Plated Pencil-cases.
5,000	„	Silver Bangles.
5,000	„	Penknives.
5,000	„	Pen and Pencil Boxes (3 deckers.)
10,000	„	Paint Boxes.
10,000	„	Boxes of Dominoes.
10,000	„	Pearl and Porcupine Penholders.
10,000	„	Compasses.
10,000	„	Boxes of Crayons.
20	Prizes of	ONE POUND each.
20	„	TEN SHILLINGS each.

From now until November 25th a coupon will appear on the front page of cover of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES, SHORT STORIES, and PASTIMES. To the person who collects the greatest number of these coupons and sends them to us on a date we shall specify later, we will give the sum of One Hundred Pounds; to the collector of the second greatest number we will give Fifty Pounds, and so on until the whole 100,043 prizes have been awarded.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

This is the only competition that has ever been devised in which every competitor will get a prize.

All the articles enumerated above are of the best make and well worth possessing, therefore no prize will be given to any person who sends fewer than 200 coupons.

The prizes altogether will cost us about £10,000.

Ask any friend of yours who reads our papers to give you his coupons.

The Competition will run for twenty-nine weeks. If the members of your family take in "P.W.," "H.N.," "S.S.," and "Pastimes," and you collect the coupons from each, this will give you 114 coupons. You can easily obtain from your friends the balance to make up the 200, in which case you will be certain of getting a prize.

A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss fire. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same, your 200 coupons would win you £100.

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One Thousand Pounds for You

£100 FOR A NEWSAGENT OR BOOKSTALL CLERK. £5 FOR EACH OF THE BOOKSTALL BOYS.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in England and Wales for the week ending July 1st, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk from whom you obtained this copy of "*S.S.*" to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Newsagents and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£100,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £100 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, and the £5 for bookstall boys.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in England and Wales for the corresponding period during the past three years.

The figures published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending July 4th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending July 3rd, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending July 2nd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,372	3,691	7,115	3,106	6,575	3,203

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

This Competition closes on Wednesday, June 28th.

S. S.

My estimate is - { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

.....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," AND "PASTIMES."

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

X.—A CALAVERAS HOLD-UP.

ONE sunny summer noon of the year 1880, a man lay under a clump of chaparral at the base of a scrub-oak, near a roadside in the Calaveras foothills. He lay face-downwards, with his head on his arms; and the flies crawled over the dirt on his clothes and the pistol at his belt, only suffering disturbance because of the industry of the black ant colony which had discovered meat among the bread crumbs that had fallen from his pocket.

He looked asleep, but, to one who might have seen, there were slits in the sombrero that covered his head, and the eyes behind them were not closed. Rather, they scarcely winked in their steady scrutiny.

The road here near the crest of the hill took a sharp right angle to the north, and picked its way brokenly to the summit over rocks and through stumps and standing trees. To the south-west below, it could be seen for miles on its upward course, appearing and disappearing among the open stretches and the woodland. The scrub-oak would have to lengthen its broad shadow very perceptibly before the man would find it necessary to get on his feet; so he allowed a portion of his attention to revert to the cause of his being here.

Billy Owen was not analytical. He did not go back any farther than his love for a woman as the representative cause of the present effect. The spirit of his ancestors, trained to struggle and conquest, had suffered a taint in bygone years, and he had become the son of an uncertain race. There were men of them rude in virtue as well as strength, and men of them branded with a shifting eye and hunted step.

Billy had always had his pleasure with a gun in his hand until these wondrous twelve months of his knowledge of Rudy. That that slight person had no acquaintance with the manner of his former life was due to the respect in which Billy held her. For himself, he couldn't get rid of a troublesome pride when he called up the men—the brakemen, and engine-drivers, and inflated conductors—who had backed away from the steel-ringed mouth of his revolver, his Betty. And the brakemen, and engine-drivers, and enflated conductors who hadn't backed away, and whom Betty had barked at, gave him almost more pride than the treasures he had borne off from under their bodies.

But a man must be capering to more than one tune if he's to dance in the open all his life, so Billy had been giving his later days to the panning for gold in secluded spots of the Californian Sierras; and the first Sunday that he had lent to the village had been taken by Rudy. He remembered it all very clearly. He had been so careful to shave. We must remember a moustache of straw colour that brought out the steel in his small grey eyes. He had not changed his working dress, for a knife slips down a yawning boot-leg, and a flannel shirt yields best to one's muscles in motion. A hat with a brim was the most comfortable, and Billy sauntered carelessly into the street.

It had seemed to him queer that the street was so empty. Only occasional men swung in and out of salon doors, and the rival hotel chairs rested wholly idle. But it was not long before he found the cause.

A little paint-blistered church stood round the corner, and its open doors had swallowed almost the entire populace. It seemed waiting for more, while the thin notes of its rejoicing bell chased each other out on the air. Service must have been about to begin, for there was only a girl standing out on the steps, and the horses in ranks along the fences, who slept, or brushed flies, or hated their neighbours, as their natures gave impulse.

Billy looked contemptuously at the church, and turned on his heel to shake off its dust just as the restless eyes of a high-headed roan brought him to a halt.

It was then that he had heard a voice he felt he would never forget.

"There is room," it called.

Billy Owen had gone on looking over the roan. He was not the man to waste Sunday in church.

"Father's to preach on fighting," he heard it again. "There are fights that he approves."

It was a voice, Billy thought, the bees would look for. He threw her a glance that shouldn't reveal any weakness for the sort of fighting that the parson approved of, and straightway forgot to look off again. Rudy Field was smiling at him, and Rudy was radiant with the spirit of well-doing. The bell's noisy excitement had given way to the voices of the people in an opening hymn of thanksgiving, and the girl hurried down the steps, passed the horses, and laid her hand on his arm.

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"He says men ought to break each other's heads if there's cause," she added meaningly, turning her eyes away towards the church.

"If two men want to get up and fight just for the pleasure of fightin'," said Billy, "and are glad to shake hands when one of 'em is hollerin'?"

Rudy's gentle eyes gave out their inspiration.

"Come and see if he'll mention tha'," she said. And Billy went to his undoing.

It was never clear to him what the parson's fighting views really were. There must have been in them material of good sort, because he remembered the noisy approval of his fellow-men. As for himself, a straight little form and a thin little face, with a voice singing up to the angels, left no consciousness of a judicial nature. After the last rousing hymn and the dignity of the benediction, he had sat so still that the church was emptying and the parson was up to him. If Billy had wanted to, there would have been no escaping the zealous warmth of purpose which drew him into the family life and the church life of this country minister. The man had only Rudy and a rough little house, but the restlessness of his energy used them both for his ends.

And the days had taken wings. Billy found through the hours of his lonely working that there was something in his mind supplanting Betty and the bodies which were testimony of his prowess and his power.

Rudy's father had been Rudy's life, and she lay awake in the night now, because a man strong in his youth and the power of his love was coming between them. The atmosphere of her training had left her without the protection of suspicion, and Rudy had only the education that her frailness, their poverty, and shifting life could yield. Her feminine nature showed her Billy Owen's masterful physique, his superior strength, and tonic vitality. She had begun to have insight into Billy's will power. But, of all men, he gave to her deference, and gentleness, and the alertness of his interests.

And what she was conscious must come, came.

Two miners were hurt in an accident by fire, and the minister was called for in the absence of the doctor. He had arranged to hold services in a village three miles north, and Rudy was left to carry to it the news that the service could not be held. She put on a sunbonnet and went out to the barn. The old mare stepped listlessly into the shafts, when a shadow fell over the floor, and Billy filled up the doorway.

"Your father said I was to look out that you got there." He laughed, uncertain still of his welcome.

Rudy had dreaded the lonely twilight drive, and her face must have spoken for her tongue had not; but Billy took up the harnessing with a light on his own face that sent Rudy into the depths of her bonnet. She kept on her side of the mare, and buckled and strapped in a tangle of leather, with an indiscretion that sent her hands to the check at Jane's head just at the moment when Billy's must meet them.

And Billy held them close, while Jane dropped her nose and sniffed at some barley grains, indifferent to the fact that her toilet was forgotten.

"Your father'd give me the word to fight the man that could take ye from me now," Billy said.

And Rudy was whiter than the hair on Jane when it happened to be clean.

"It's my father I shall never leave," she answered him.

"It's the father, His book tells ye, shall be left for the husband."

Billy dropped her hands to come round and take her in his arms.

"Say no more, girl, but the word you love me."

And Rudy had said it. And Rudy had sobbed over it, and laughed over it, and sung over it before the message was delivered and Jane in her stall again.

This was a perplexity Rudy's father laid in Heaven's care. "There must be something to live on," he had said.

And what had always made Billy's living but his revolver—his Betty? The mining was snail's pace at best, and with Rudy on his heart there was mad need of haste. With everything at his hand and his Colt ready there were only the plans, which he straightway laid. Money for the northern mines passed under his nose once every month. Mounted messengers were the things he and Betty were used to, and the advantage of his isolated claim gave him the chance for doing in the hours of an unoccupied afternoon.

The flies lifted off on lazy wings as the figure under the chaparral at the base of the scrub-oak heaved on to an elbow and measured the shadow. With the sharp focus of quick sight, he turned to the road again. Down in the far distance a cloud of dust hung in the air. The man went on his stomach again. The flies settled, the ants took up their burden, and the summer sun burnt over all.

On came the rolling dust, the four horses, the driver, the messenger, and the passengers. They must have passed by Rudy's little house; perhaps Rudy had been looking out at them. Well, the fools need not be hurt—it is only to march to the music.

The man bent one leg and rested upon his knee to readjust the hot, black mask that covered his face. He peered down the road again.

The coach must be half up the last slope. It was out of sight, but the snap of the whip came to his ears as a signal.

"Betty," he whispered close to the barrel, and got on his feet.

Against the trunk of the dusty oak a man crouched, with his finger on the trigger of a gun. A stage-coach rocked into view with two men, a pale little woman, and a messenger, who sat on the box.

"Halt."

The horses came back on their haunches, Betty's steel-rimmed mouth had covered them all.

"Throw out your express box and unload your passengers."

Three men and a woman lined along the roadside with their hands to the sky, and a green, brass-handled box lay in the dust.

"Out with your horses, my hearty, and line up."

The nerve of one man can undo the natural and customary method of four of his fellows. The driver took his team to the rear of his passengers, and Billy stepped to the front with Betty as steady as became a woman-of-war.

He ran his eye over the men. It would be time to release the woman when danger was past.

"Fall to on that box," Billy directed. He signalled a man of generous build and ample manner, but the gentleman seemed reluctant to obey.

"One," said Billy. "Two—"

But the man was in the middle of the road, willing and toolless. An axe was dragged from the coach, and he sent the hot fury of his anger into the strokes of the steel.

"Cut the mail pouches," came the next order, and the

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messenger writhed under cover as he ripped with his knife.

At that moment fell the certain distant sound of approaching horses. Heaven knows there was need of haste, and Billy emphasised the vigour of his threats with oaths.

Sweat fell from the men as he turned to the woman.

"Into the—" Billy began,—and Rudy was looking up at him!

Rudy with face like chalk, and her heart broken and bleeding.

Heavens! There is one thing no man can face—the faith of a woman struck back into her heart!

Billy and the revolver wavered, and the messenger sprang to his feet.

"Get him," he cried, and his bullet went wide of the mark.

Confusion ensued in a moment. Men's hands leapt to their pockets for weapons and signalled the team coming up.

Billy wasted nothing of the aid Betty held for him. He plunged into the brush at the east with his brain and his heart in the thrall of his shock. About him crashed and split a rain of bullets, and he knew there were many of them ready to follow him on the spot

He swore himself into energy, and beat on through the thick, thorny underbush with the hope of their disorder sustaining him. There was a small stone corral someone had told him of—Rudy had told him of! It was hemmed in with rocks and chapparral. For a theatre of war it was safest for the man inside it and there was only one approach! Rudy had once found herb roots there.

He turned sharp to the south and trailed back again, conscious that his scent was strong and his arm true, and woe to the men who had lived peaceful lives in the fields of their country!

Wet drops of something warm trickled down his back. There must be a wound there. Billy forced his way along, cutting through tangles, leaping the rocks, and scaling the boulders, only halting for a second to separate insect noises from that of the hunt of men. If he could reach his corral there would be at least breathing space for further campaigning. They were after him, hot on his trail, he knew.

The long, slim shadows of the late afternoon had been swallowed in the monotone of twilight when Billy Owen sat on his heels behind the walls of a stone corral on the sheer slope of a Sierra hill. The inflammation of his wound was racking his head, but the keenest pain he suffered was not from that.

And there could be no moment of time given over to the undisturbed thought of it.

His senses were preternaturally alert; they made time record of the night-miller's winging and the life of the lizards in the wall at his face. The red leaves of a poison-oak vine served as his shelter, and above this, and about it, and beyond it the chapparal, and the pines.

From behind the mass of summer foliage the eyes of a man and the mouth of a gun were at aim and waiting.

But it was Rudy's face that was searing with fire the brain of the man—Rudy's face, which had only known love for him, and trust in him, and pride of him. It went over him cold that her scorn of him might set them on his track. She might guess what he would make for. They had laughed at it as a robber resort. But the thought could not live. Rudy's womanliness——

Hark! There could be no mistake—a step! He had been waiting hours for it. It could come. He needed no change of movement to send it into silence. There would be more of them behind. There must be no delay in wiping them out.

There it comes again, on and up. The fool! Does he think his life is worth juggling for? An unlodged stone trips jerkily down the hillside, and some bats blacken the air over his head. Betty is so safe, and so sure, and so ready that he will let the idiot come into her face.

A hand shows through the bushes at the gate of the corral. Billy is forced to turn; it is someone who knows the run of the land. A black figure thrusts through the branches and Betty throws out her ball of death.

"Billy," he heard in its last terrible note of misunderstanding.

He sits in the open and holds her in his arms. Her black hair hangs over her face, and he thrusts it back to clasp her against his breast, against his lips.

At midnight they find Billy Owen, the bandit. There is a woman in his arms, and their lives have gone out on a common search.

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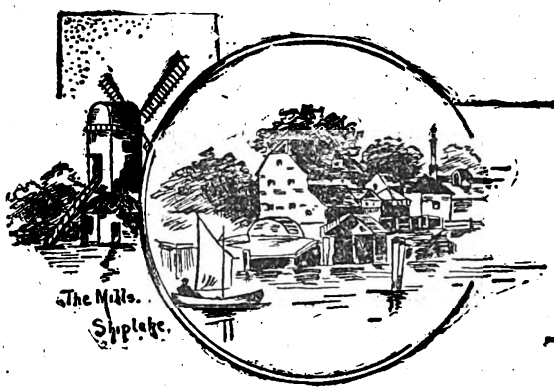

In the Dark.

BLIND men, however sharpened their remaining senses may become, would not exactly be selected as the fittest agents for the purpose in which I once found myself engaged. Still there is no knowing to what they may have to put their wits; and, although I have no pretentions to being sharper than the rest of my fellow-sufferers, yet there is no doubt that when one has to rely very persistently on all one's faculties in order to keep fairly abreast of ordinary mortals, it is wonderful how quick the apprehension and the power of drawing conclusions become.

You are not concerned with the history of my infirmity—how I lost my sight and so forth—it is enough for the present purpose if I say that I have been blind for some twenty years—that I have grown quite accustomed and reconciled to my fate, and, without making light of it, have ceased to think about it or regard it as interfering materially with the ordinary conduct of daily life.

Very well, then. I chanced some three years ago to be staying with some friends in their country house—not very far from London, nevertheless situated in a delightfully rural and secluded district. My host and hostess lived in good style, kept much company and entertained in munificent fashion. Most of their friends, too, were wealthy, and the jewellery, as I was told, which occasionally sparkled within those hospitable walls, represented vast sums of money. It was a thoroughly easy-going establishment. Meals were made movable feasts to suit the varied arrangements, which a constant programme of amusement entailed.

The month was August, the weather was fine and hot, and on the particular evening in question it so happened that dinner was to partake of a character of a late supper, to suit the convenience of the house party, who were going to make a picnic excursion on the neighbouring Thames, and meant to stay on the water until nearly midnight.

Now, I did not join them for two reasons—firstly, because I wanted to enjoy the quiet and peace of the house, gardens, and shrubberies, when entirely deserted; secondly, because always a bad sleeper, I had been more than usually wakeful for some nights, and I determined to go to bed early and to take a certain narcotic, which had been recommended as quite harmless and exceedingly pleasant. It consisted of a powder, and the directions said it was to be mixed with a pint bottle of light claret, a glass or two of which might be taken on going to bed, or in the course of the night if occasion required.

Early in the evening I secured the wine from the butler, and myself mixed it with the drug by simply shooting the latter dexterously in the bottle. Then I shook it, corked it, and stood it on the bed-table with a large claret glass, to be ready for use when I retired for the night.

This I did, as I proposed, a little before ten, at which time I was the sole occupant of the house, with the exception of the servants. Their quarters, with kitchens, lay at the extreme opposite wing from that in which my bedroom was situated.

Thus, as I crept up the main staircase, with the aid of my stick, and by feeling the well-known landmarks by which I am always able to guide myself after very little practice along passages and corridors, my foo steps echoed strangely, and I was conscious that an unusual air of solitude pervaded the place. Of course, the twilight had faded into night by this time, but that made no difference to me, and naturally I carried no candle.

Somehow, nevertheless, I had a strange feeling of not quite liking the solitude—a sensation akin to nervousness I suppose it would be called. Unaccustomed to regard myself as a coward, I could have wished that the house had not seemed quite so lonely. It was a vague, vain, and ridiculous idea, I knew; still, the nearer I got to my room, the more it possessed me.

When I laid my hand on the lock, for a moment it quite overwhelmed me, and I need hardly say that when I found the door resist my effort to open it, my discomfiture was complete. Then after a moment I pulled myself together, feeling heartily ashamed of the rapidity with which my heart was beating. Another push at the door, and it opened partially—enough to admit me. Something had fallen inside and blocked it.

I stooped to discover what it was, and presently my fingers lighted on a wedge-shaped block of wood with a screw sticking partially through it. This had caused the jam. But what could it be? However, I left it on the floor, closed the door and walked slowly towards the window, knowing every step of the way.

The window—a French one opening on to a small balcony—to my surprise was not closed, as I was certain I had left it an hour or two earlier, when I brought up the wine to my room. You might think these little discoveries would have increased my nervousness. They had a contrary effect; at least every sensation was swallowed up in surprise and curiosity as to what could have happened.

However, I began slowly to undress. A blind man has to do most mechanical things slowly, if he would not be perpetually bruising or maiming himself, and so I went on for a few minutes fumbling about with my

garments as usual, depositing each in its accustomed place, for only by that means are we incapables able to find any object with certainty again.

Suddenly I thought of the purpose which had brought me to bed so early, and began to doubt if I was going through a good preparation for giving the sleeping draught a fair chance. I had grown wider and wider awake every moment from that when, ascending the stairs, I had first felt a sense of loneliness. Nevertheless, I determined to take a glass of my light claret forthwith, considering that by the time I should be getting into bed it would be beginning to take effect.

I stepped out in the direction of the table where it stood, felt about for an instant, and the next had the bottle within my grasp. Then I found the glass, and was proceeding as I expected, to take the cork out, when lo! there was no cork. Raising the bottle, I instantly knew from its lightness that it was empty.

This discovery was conclusive.

Somebody had been in the room—perhaps was in the room at this moment—a most unpleasant notion, but I was no longer nervous.

"Who is there?—speak!" I cried. "Who are you, and where are you?"

No reply. I listened intently; not a sound broke the stillness of the sweet still night. Taking my stick, I thrust it under the bed and round about in various corners of the room. The furniture appeared a little disarranged but otherwise there was no evidence of the presence of any human being. Very strange, I thought. Anyway, I must ring for the footman—for I may say here that I dislike being valeted, and beyond indispensable assistance, prefer doing everything as much as I can for myself, especially in my bedroom.

As my hand passed across the corner of the table it knocked something off on to the ground which rattled like tin and glass. Not stopping to investigate, the next discovery my sensitive fingers made on the table was some short iron tool. I took it up and felt it, but could not make out what it was, so proceeded to grope for the bell-rope.

Now, with all that had gone before, imagine my sensations when, as my fingers passed over the edge of the pillow on the way to the top of the bedstead, they fell upon a warm human cheek. Yes; the cheek of a man, as I knew instantaneously from his sparse whiskers.

Imagine my sensations, I say at that moment.

That I was startled beyond expression I admit; but I checked my impulse to shout aloud. I stepped back into the middle of the room, bumping against a chair or something in my haste. In two seconds, however, I had collected my wits. Quick as thought, almost, I drew my conclusions and settled what to do.

I went to the window, closed and fastened it as securely and as noiselessly as I could, for I had no desire to disturb the intruder, who, so far, except for the warmth of his flesh, showed no sign of life—my quick ears told me that. I stood still for a moment listening and could not even hear him breathe.

Then I crept to the door, felt for the key, which had been, I knew, inside, but it was no longer in the lock. By great good luck, just as I was debating how I might secure the door on the outside, my foot trod on what I knew to be the key. It was lying close to that bit of wood with the screw which had first attracted my attention.

I now guessed that it was a wedge that had been placed in the crack between door and floor; but so carelessly that it had yielded to my pressure. So, picking it up with the key, I passed out into the passage and softly closed and locked the door after me.

At least, I thought, whoever you are, you shan't get out this way. Then I made what haste I could along the corridor and down the stairs, rang the dining-room bell, and in a few minutes had told my story to the butler.

He was for immediately rushing upstairs to see about it all.

"No, no, Pitts," said I, "wait a bit. Call two of the footmen, and let them take up a position where they can see that no one leaves the room. Go out and get hold of two or three gardeners—anybody, and post them under the window. Then start off somebody from the stable to the village for the constable—for two constables, if there are two. Now, quick's the word. The fellow is sound asleep, whoever he is; but we may as well make sure of him."

These orders were rapidly carried out, and in less than half an hour two stalwart policemen arrived. One joined the men under the window, the second, the head constable, went upstairs with the butler and myself. He was the first to enter the room. I slipped in to listen.

"Hullo, my man, what are you up to here? Come, wake up; give an account of yourself."

A pause.

"Why he is as sound as a top still."

A noise as of shaking something; another pause.

"Oh yes, of course, here's a nice little game; dark lantern rolled over on the floor, jimmy and crowbar, box of noiseless matches, and all the rest of it, I see. Here you, wake up. This 'ere kidding won't wash; get up and come along with me quietly." Another shaking.

"Oh you won't, won't you? Hullo, what's this? Oh indeed; armed, ay? Yes, a six-shooter in your breast pocket. Fully loaded too, no doubt. We'll see to that a bit later. Ah! and a knuckle-duster too, by jig! You are an ugly customer and no mistake, you are. What a lucky thing you're so sound asleep,—to-o-o be sure; and I'll make sure of you, my friend, while I've got the chance, anyhow. These 'ere bracelets will fit you like gloves."

A pause again, a little fumbling, followed by the audible click of the handcuffs.

"Call up my mate, sir, will you please?" This, no doubt, to the butler, who, going to the window and opening it, shouted to the man below, who soon entered the room. Then I could guess pretty well from the sound what they did, which, of course, was to lug the fellow off the bed, thinking that would wake him; but although he fell on the floor with a heavy thud, it appeared to do nothing of the kind.

Then the thought suddenly flashed through my mind that he had drunk, deeply, no doubt, of my particular brew, and remembering that the bottle was empty, I trembled lest, having taken half a dozen doses of the fascinating mixture at once, he might never recover from his sleep. So stepping forward I stated my surmise as to what had happened, and said: "You had better send for a doctor immediately."

"Well, p'raps so, sir," agreed the constable; "it would be best anyways, for he's about as heavy a bit of goods to move as I've come across for a long while."

Then they laid the burglar on the floor, propped up his head, and left him in charge of the officers till the

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doctor arrived. He did so just as my hosts and their friends returned from their excurson, and you may judge of the excitement that followed throughout the household.

The medical man, after due examination, and suggesting certain douches of cold water, reassured us all with the statement that he would not die. My assumption as to the cause of his coma was so feasible as not to admit of dispute. Doubtless by aid of his dark lantern he saw the bottle of wine with its label announcing it to be Medoc of the first quality. Tasting and trying, and finding it to be a light and agreeable fluid, he drained the bottle at a gulp, probably as the first step towards giving him the necessary courage and strength to proceed with the business of the night.

In this he was probably interrupted by the rapid action of the excessive dose, and feeling suddenly overcome by a drowsy stupor, had staggered to the bed and thrown himself helplessly upon it. The fellow had entered the room, of course, by the balcony, having hauled himself up with a rope to which was attached a hook, and which was discovered with the remaining tools of his fascinating craft.

At the expiration of some three or four hours, and in the dead of night, he recovered sufficient consciousness to stand up, and he was then marched off between the two constables, locked up, and eventually punished according to law.

"On the whole," said the doctor to me later on, when we were laughing over the adventure, "on the whole, sir, it is a good thing for you that you tried the effect of the narcotic on some one else. Take my advice, sir, and don't resort to narcotics; they are always dangerous, and that must have been especially so. The drug clearly was a very powerful one.

"You have had a lucky escape in every way, for if you had come into conflict with that gentleman—remembering how he was prepared—I am afraid he would have left his mark on you; whereas you have turned the tables and, after a fashion, left yours on him.

"I wish the law would help you to make it indelible on his back with a good round dozen of the cat. It is the only way to put a stop to this armed business; it is the only thing these rascals dread.

"However, he will give blind men a wide berth for the future, I prophesy, now that he has found one of them such a capital thief-taker."

B. Robins.

A Clinical Lecture.

Accompanied by a number of students, who each morning attended his clinical conferences, Dr. Maurice de Vellin gravely advanced into the wards of the Lariboisière Hospital.

Young, hardly in his fortieth year, but already one of the most influential members of the medical faculty of Paris, Dr. de Vellin impressed one as being a man of extreme severity, yet capable of the utmost gentleness. He spoke concisely, and his large dark eyes, keenly observant, had an indefinable expression of profound reverie.

Not through his wealth, but by working unceasingly and through his intellectual gifts, he had gained all the degrees obtainable in his profession. Without relaxation, he, rung by rung, had climbed the scientific ladder from the rôle of simple student to the honourable title of Professor of the Medical Faculty and Member of the Institute. As brave as intelligent, he had been awarded on the field of honour the red rosette that ornamented the lapel of his frock-coat.

Dr. de Vellin was an acknowledged savant, but of a modest disposition that bordered on timidity. He lived alone in a small though luxurious apartment, having as companion an old servant who had served his family for many years. Although considered strange and eccentric by the staff and inmates of the hospital, Dr. de Vellin was neither strange nor eccentric, but a deep thinker whose existence had been influenced by some mysterious sorrow.

On either side of the large ward, small iron cots were placed in a military row, the curtains giving to the ward a festive appearance—if it were possible for a ward in a hospital to have a seeming gaiety.

At each cot the master and his pupils remained a few minutes. Here a word of consolation, there a word of cheer; but frequently away from the sufferers, the physician would dart a glance to the students, the expression indicating that Heaven alone could heal where science had exhausted all its resources.

And these sufferers, like dying warriors who had fought bravely, yet still striving to prolong the inevitable end, eagerly and hungrily grasped and cherished the slightest word of hope. How their eyes lingered on the troop of doctors and students as they quitted the ward.

They passed into one of the women's wards.

"Have you any new cases?" asked the physician of the attendant.

"A young girl. Picked up by the ambulance last night. Breathing with great difficulty and in a very high fever. We diagnosed the case as congestion of the lungs, and having not had the time to make a complete

examination of the subject, we beg you to make it in our presence."

The physician nodded acquiescently and inquired:

"Which bed?"

"The one occupied yesterday by the typhoid fever patient, whose autopsy we made this morning, No. 27." Dr. de Vellin approached the cot named, and drawing aside the spotless curtains saw lying before him a young girl.

Perhaps she was one of those beings from whom misery and suffering had so mercilessly ravished the lustre of beauty and the charm of youth. It was a beautiful face had it not been marred by an excessive pallidity which was intensified by contrast with the heavy ebony hair that framed it.

The fire of her bistre eyes had long been extinct; her pale lips too had long ceased to frame piteous words; her colourless cheeks had lost their childish roundness; her breast heaved and fell faintly and at each breath her now attenuated but finely moulded body became rigid with the pain which even this slight respiration caused her.

On perceiving the physician the girl stirred and raised herself, but the effort brought from her lips a thin stream of blood and powerless she sank back upon the pillow.

After making the anscultation, Dr. de Villen confirmed the diagnosis of the attendant and added:

"The last stage; you know what you have to do." He turned to leave but suddenly turning addressed the girl.

"What age are you, my child?"

"Seventeen," she replied almost inaudibly.

"Seventeen!" he repeated, in a pitying undertone. "And what is your name?"

"Mathilde."

Was it the reflection of the curtains that caused the sudden pallor on the physician's face?

"Yes—yes, but your family name."

"Alas! Monsieur, my mother is dead. She embraced me when I was eight years of age for the last time."

"Of what did your mother die?"

"Ah! her story is only like so many of the poor little working-girls of Paris. She met one day a young man above her in birth and education. With him she spent many joyous months; but her babe had been cradled in her arms a short, short time when he abandoned both, and a few years after my mother died from grief and misery."

"And your father——?"

"My father? I have never seen him. He was a medical student and deceived my mother, even when he promised marriage."

The physician motioned the students to withdraw to a little distance, while he bent over the girl as if the words which fell from her lips were too precious to lose.

"Yes, monsieur, and notwithstanding his cruelty my mother told me to respect his memory always."

Dr. de Vellin passed his hand over his cold and damp forehead. Then slowly, seeming to weigh and realise the import of each one of his words, and searching his most sacred, innermost thoughts, he said:

"You are seventeen, you say. This is the year 186—*then*, 185—seventeen years ago—I—I was—in——Your mother, her name!"

The physician's trembling hand clenched and crushed the curtains, while he huskily repeated:

"Her name! Her name!"

"Mathilde Vanier, like mine, and like her, I have known misery and hunger, and from hunger—shame!"

* * * * *

The students saw a man's bowed form beside the little cot and wondered.

Two small delicate hands were outstretched suppliantly, but the arms refused their support and they fell white and cold upon the clasped ones over the man's face that was pressed against the cot.

At the touch of those poor hands he raised his haggard face. Each saw their eyes reflected as in a mirror, as they for that instant gazed at each other. The students saw and again wondered. The girl feebly raised herself, then fell forward.

A stream of blood rushed from her lips on to the side of the cot, dyeing the physician's fingers with its colour as it dripped into a pool on the floor. Uttering a cry he clasped the inanimate body in his arms, pressing it against his own, as if wanting to impart to this slender form the strength and life of his, while he passionately uttered:

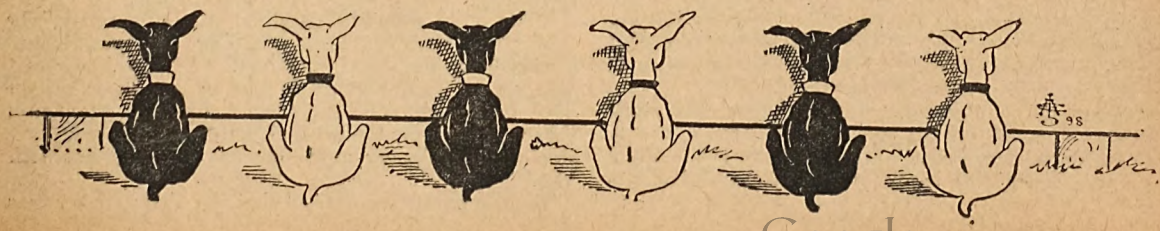
"No, you must not die—no—no—Mathilde, Mathilde—my——"

Suddenly thrusting the corpse from him, he recoiled. His bloodshot eyes wandered from his stained hands to the pool on the floor, from the pool to the dead girl, and again to his hands. He shivered like one bitterly cold—smiled—flung back his grand head, then a harsh, piercing, ferocious—horrible laugh rang through the ward.

* * * * *

Dr. Maurice de Vellin was mad!

B. de Tehain.



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TOLD IN THE GLOAMING.

RAY STANNARD was at supper with his pretty wife Isobel. It was a wholesome and plentiful meal, for Isobel, although out of active culinary practice—she was a highly expert stenographer when Stannard wooed and won her—still showed that her early training was not of an ephemeral type.

It was a nice supper in a nice, cosy room, with a remarkably nice young woman on the opposite side of the table, and yet Ray wore a discontented look.

"Same old ogre, dear?" asked Isobel, as she slowly filled his second cup.

"Yes," growled Ray, "and more ogerish than ever. Farnham was terribly out of sorts to-day. He cut and slashed the copy like a Malay running amuck. And I had such a beautiful story."

"Yes, dear," said Isobel, as she sympathetically put another muffin on his plate.

"Less than a column, too," continued Ray, "and how much do you suppose Farnham cut it down? To just twelve lines! I tell you it knocks every flicker of ambition clear out of a man."

"Too bad," sighed Isobel.

It was an old grievance with Ray and she knew it would do him good to talk himself out.

"Yes," he went on, "I felt like going in to the governor and saying: 'Here's an independent soul you can't put through your condemned old condensing crusher,' but of course I didn't do it. It would have been too expensive a luxury. Old Farnham can't help his share in it. He called me over to his desk this afternoon and said:

"'Why do you throw away your time and talent elaborating these stories? You ought to know by this time that they can't go. That stuff of yours to-day about the old man was clever, but the actual news in it was all contained in the few lines I left.'

"'Farnham,' I answered, 'you remember that story of Poe's where the ceiling slowly but surely descends upon the doomed wretch? Well, that's just the way I feel now. Condensing is squeezing all the ambition out of me.'

"Farnham laughed.

"'Cheer up,' said he. 'Perhaps some day you'll have a paper of your own.'

"'If I do,' I said, 'there'll not be a blue pencil within a mile of it.'

"But it's the same way every day. I can't throttle my fancy, I can't nail myself down to the cut-and-dried facts."

There was a brief pause. Ray finished his tea, shook out his napkin and pushed back his chair.

"Let us sit in the parlour a little while," said Isobel. "We don't want any light. It will be a sort of gloaming séance," and she laughed lightly.

So they sat in the little parlour. Ray in the great easy chair that Isobel had given him on his last birthday, and Isobel herself in her sewing rocker by the big bay window.

"Well, we must be thankful for one thing," Isobel said, with a restful little sigh, "and that is that you are not on a morning paper."

Ray heard her rummaging in her desk for a moment or two, and then the squeak of the little rocker began again.

"And now, dear," she continued, "I want to hear that good story that was so sadly disfigured by the naughty blue pencil. Tell it to me just as you wrote it, word for word. It mustn't be entirely wasted."

Ray was used to obeying, and, besides he was rather proud of his unmistakable story-telling talent. So, out of the depths of the great easy chair, his voice proudly arose.

It was a touching little story of a man whose idolised daughter had run away from her fine home to marry a worthless fellow.

Ray had interviewed her father, and now he told the tale in the father's own words, giving the very intonations of voice and the peculiar dialect of the somewhat illiterate old man. It was not an unusual story by any means, but Ray told it so well that he seemed to invest it with an original dignity.

"The white-haired father stood in the doorway," he said, "and with his hand shading his eyes, looked anxiously up and down the street. 'Perhaps,' he slowly said, 'what you're going to put in the paper will be read by Mabel. If 'tis, she'll know that the hands that took her from the arms of her dyin' mother are still stretched to take her agin—but not with him, not with him.'"

As Ray paused he noticed that the little rocker was still.

"And Farnham cut that down to twelve lines," he querulously said.

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He arose as he spoke and struck a match and lighted the big lamp on the centre table.

Isobel was standing by the desk with her face in the shadow. Then she turned and came forward.

"Why, Isobel," said Ray with swift tenderness, "you've been crying."

"It—it's the sudden glare of the lamp," she lamely explained. And Ray wondered afterward what could have so depressed her.

That was the beginning of a long series of in-the-gloaming conversations, as Isobel called them.

Every evening of the waning summer and early fall, they would sit in the cosy parlour for a half hour or so, and Isobel would draw Ray into talking over the events of the day. Sometimes there would be only a grist of trivial incidents.

And while he talked Isobel sat in the sewing rocker by the little desk, drumming lightly with her pencil and taking good care not to interrupt Ray as he lost himself in whatever he happened to be telling.

They were a great relaxation for him, these half-hour talks. They restored for a brief while his crushed vanity.

"I'm always sure of a select and sympathetic audience," he said with a boyish laugh.

And he improved, too, as a raconteur. He recognised the improvement, and so did Isobel.

They were no longer aimless little happenings that he told. They were dramatic sketches, full of strength and feeling.

Isobel met him one afternoon as he came from the office.

"Oh," she cried, "that was a beautiful story you told last night. It was even better than I thought it was."

"Eh," cried Ray, with a puzzled look. "You must have been brooding over it. What a memory you have!"

There was a heightened colour in Isobel's cheeks as she led the way to the table, but Ray didn't notice it. He was full of a new idea.

"Nixon called to me to-day as I passed his room," he said, "and asked me why I didn't go in for short story writing. My sketches showed that I had talent that way. It was a good deal for Nixon to say. I told him I had never thought of it. Anyway, I couldn't carry a story to completion. Brain fag and lack of industry would knock it out in no time. No, my dear, your handicapped Ray will continue to swing around the reportorial orbit and leave this story writing to the fellows with perseverance and a pull."

But Isobel only laughed.

So the summer passed and the autumn wore along, and, lo! Christmas was close at hand.

It would be the second Christmas day that Isobel and Ray had enjoyed together. It was Isobel who recalled the important fact.

"The other one was so closely mixed up with our honeymoon that it quite lost its identity," she said.

"Every day was Christmas with us then," sang Ray to a barbarous tune of his own invention.

It was the day before Christmas and Ray came home in a state of mild excitement.

"Two queer things happened at the office to-day," he said. "Just as I was leaving to-night old Nixon called to me as I passed. 'Hullo Ray,' he said, 'I see that you have found time,' and he winked at me in a most singular manner. 'Capital, too,' he shouted after me as I hurried along. What do you suppose he meant?"

Isobel was busy at the table and only shook her head.

"And then," continued Ray, "as I passed down the stairs I met Graham, our book reviewer, coming up, his arms overflowing with books as usual. It's rare indeed, that he ever nods to me, but this time he peered over his glasses and actually stopped.

"'It's Ray Stannard, isn't it?' he cried in his shrill voice. 'Glad to know you, sir. It's good, very good, indeed. I'm going to say so. A merry Christmas to you, Ray Stannard, and to Mrs. Stannard, and all the little Stannards,' and he chuckled and passed on."

"A very rude person," said Isobel with a red face. "What do you suppose he meant?"

"Haven't a blessed idea. He doesn't drink, so he's either getting queer, or he mistook me for somebody else. But it seemed funny, coming right on top of what Nixon said."

He paused and looked round.

"Did you——" he began, when Isobel interrupted him.

"Yes, yes," she cried, "they arrived all right. Such lovely chairs, and such a nice centre table! Just what we needed. Thank you so much, dear."

And then she thanked him in the good old way.

It was a pleasant little supper; so pleasant that Ray forgot all about the blue-pencil grievance.

When it was finished he leant back and laughingly asked:

"Do we enjoy the customary author's reading to-night?"

"No," said Isobel, "our holidays commence like the Jewish fast days at sundown. We will illuminate the reading room to-night for a change. Now wait, sir, while I light up."

She bustled into the parlour and presently called him.

The new centre table, flanked right and left by the new chairs, stood out in all its glory. Beside the lamp lay a square package.

Ray's gaze fell upon it.

"Your Christmas present, dear," murmured Isobel.

He tore off the wrapper impatiently.

"A book. That's fine," he said, as he drew a neat volume from its paper sheath and held it up.

"Wh-wh-what's this?" he quickly stammered:

BLUE-PENCIL STORIES.

By

RAY STANNARD.

He was dazed.

"Why—what? You blessed angel, what does this mean?"

He skipped from page to page with eager eyes and trembling fingers.

"Yes, yes, they are mine, but I am sure I never wrote them."

"You told them, dear," said the triumphant Isobel. "You told them in the gloaming, you know, and I took them down word for word in shorthand. And the publisher liked them so much, and you are to have a royalty on every copy sold, and——"

"What?" cried Ray, "is that what those busy fingers were doing in the twilight? Why, Isobel, dear, you are crying again."

But they were only tears of joy, and it was a very happy author that kissed them away.

For the blue-pencil spook was laid for ever.

GERALD HAWTON.

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It was New Year's Eve. The room was very quiet; only the ticking of the old clock in the corner was numbering the last moments of the old year. The solemnity of the hour awed us. The lamp was burning very low, and the firelight flickered on the panels of the wall and lit up the strong, worn features of the old man who sat motionless in the chimney corner. Our dear old friend was of a great age now, and the dying year made us think sadly that we could hardly hope to have him with us much longer.

Suddenly the clock in the corner broke the silence with the jar and rattle of old-fashioned mechanism slowly striking the hour. The old man opened his eyes.

"Was that eleven it was striking?" he asked. "The old year dies hard. Like old age, it fain would check the few grains of sand that yet remain to run. This last hour of the old year," he went on, speaking more to himself than to us, "is a breathing space in life's journey; a resting place by the road from which we can survey the long white trail that lies behind us. It is well that the retrospect is not forced on us oftener, or we should lose courage to struggle on to our appointed goal. Our path is very crooked and very tortuous from the straight track the Great Engineer marked out for us. I see time behind me very erring, very wavering, but in the right direction—thank Heaven, in the right direction! Far away in the mists of the past a great shadow, as of the shadow of death, falls across it and the warning has helped to keep it straight. That is more than fifty years ago—fifty long years this very hour when the warning came."

His voice died away lost in memories. We kept very quiet, not to disturb his train of thought. We knew vaguely that he had a story. We had heard of a wild past in the hot blood of youth and of a fearful shock. He had never spoken of his youth, and we feared he would not now. At his great age his mind was so full of memories that one jostled the other aside before his words had half expressed it. I do not think that curiosity was our motive in wishing to hear his story; there is such a thing as sympathy which is very near akin to it.

Baby probably did not understand our feelings; but she clinched the matter for us. She climbed laboriously on to "granddad's" knee (he was no relation, but a friend of many years), and buried her curly head deep in his waistcoat, saying, "Tell baby pitty story!" Then she went fast asleep. He put his arm round her, and, looking up, saw inquiry writ large on our faces. He sighed.

"A story—yes: a story," he said. "Perhaps I had better tell it you now. This is the hour, and next year it may be too late, for no one else knows it. I am the last of my race: after me there will be neither kith nor kin to bear what was once a great name. The older line died out when Rake Tony, the friend of the Regent, was flung from his horse and borne a corpse to his mistress's feet.

"The younger line will be cut off root-and-branch in me, that the sins of the fathers may be avenged to the third and fourth generation. Still, the name of my house lives in history, and even now the memory of it brings a flush of pride to my cheek. In the old times the Torringtons were among the noblest in the land. Wherever honour was to be reaped in the stricken field our ancestors bore them nobly or returned home no more. Then a blight fell upon our race.

"Folk said it dated from the time when the fanatical old Puritan, the head of our house, gathered his crop-eared knaves on New Year's Eve to sweep the advancing Royalists from Stromsey Hollow. It was in those troublous times when Charles I. was king. Old Gideon Torrington thought to square his account with Heaven for a misspent youth by an old age of fanaticism. He may have been sincere in his intolerence, though men whispered that the gold of Parliament had more to do with old Fox's conversion than the communion of the Saints. Be this as it may, he became a traitor to his king, and hounded his eldest son, who remained loyal to the traditions of his house.

"They met the Cavaliers in the Stromsey Hollow, who, outnumbered as they were, fought long and well. Their leader was a gallant gentleman of courtly bearing though his features were masked. In the thick of the *mêlée* old Gideon was flung from his horse at the feet of the Cavalier leader. For one moment the starlight glittered on the Royalist's rapier at the old rebel's throat; then the hand that held it helped the fallen man to his feet. But fanaticism knows no chivalry.

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"Scarcely had old Fox regained his feet when he drew a pistol and shot the man who had spared his life—shot him down from behind, showing that the chosen people should have no dealings with the Amalekites. Dismayed by the fall of their leader, some of his followers fled, leaving the others to die over his body.

"When the victors pulled the mask from the dead man's face old Fox saw the features of his eldest son. Even the Puritan bloodhounds fell back aghast; but their leader laughed in his dead son's face. 'If a father beget a son that hath done all these abominations, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon his own head, as saith the prophet Ezekiel,' shouted the murderer.

"Despit his boast, a curse fell upon his house, his life knew no more peace, and even after death, on New Year's Eve—so the legend ran—his restless spirit haunts the scene of his crime even to this day.

"Since that day the Torringtons have closed a wild life by a violent death, and people of the country-side said that the race was doomed.

"If I heard the story in those days, I paid no heed to it. I had just come into the property inherited by us after my uncle's death. My parents died abroad, never claiming the title or the estate. I was living a fast life in London—wine, gambling. But what profit is there in raking among the ashes of a burnt-out folly? My acquaintances shook their heads and said that Dick Danvers was going the way of all the Torringtons at a faster pace than usual. They did not try to stop me. It was very merry while it lasted, and afterwards—well, they were not their brother's keeper. There was one, however, who did care, and he, at the eleventh hour, saved me from ruin of body and soul. It had come to that. Dissipation and debauch were leading on to crime; the sins of generation were demanding the wage of death. I was pausing on the brink of destruction before the final plunge; it was a turning-point in the broad and easy road.

"Towards the end of the year I received a letter from John Borough, begging me to come down to the old place. He was Rake Tony's foster-brother, and lived now as steward on the estate, trying to save the wreck the extravagance of its owners had made it. I accepted the invitation, though I could not analyse my motives for doing so, except that he was said to have been with my uncle till the last, and I was eager to hear of the man whom (all said) I resembled. I found him a stern, reserved old man, loyal to the memory of the past. He had heard of my wild life, and begged me to stop in time, though I laughed at him for his pains.

"Well! New Year's Eve came round, and we were sitting that night in gloomy silence before the fire in the halls when the sound of galloping hoofs on the high road roused us from our reverie. I was startled by the unexpected sound so late at night in that lonely part of the country, but more by its effect on Borough. He turned pale, and half fell on his knees, crying:

"'The vengeance of Heaven! Spare this one for his youth.'

"Then I remembered the legend which ran:

> "Torrington, Torrington, 'ware the hour
> When the Old and the New Year meet,
> And Stromsey Hollow cries for blood
> In the sound of passing feet.

"'Cheer up. The ghost has got to keep outside and I am going to stay in,' I said, sneering at his superstition. He took no notice of me.

"'The same sound,' he murmured, 'and I had hoped that Tony's blood had paid the debt.'

"'What has Tony got to do with it?' I asked, awed by his emotion.

"'Listen, boy,' he said, in a low, intense voice. 'That sound means death to the Torringtons. I only heard it once before and that was when the man I loved better than a brother was called to his account with all his sins thick upon his head. It was New Year's Eve, thirty years ago. Tony had come here from London unexpectedly, worn out and restless. He seemed to be waiting for something, half-hoping, half-fearing it would not come. Late at night he was sitting here before the fire, pouring out his heart to me. He told me he had fled from a great temptation that had beset him. He had escaped; but the danger had sobered him, and perhaps there was yet time for him to make atonement. While he was speaking a servant brought him in a note. As he read it his face turned pale. Then he tossed it over to me with a bitter laugh. The note was very short; the words are stamped on my memory.

"'"You left me basely"—it ran—"I too have left everything and followed you. By your plighted word come to me to-night."

"'Never mind now what it meant. It is a story of guilty passion, of broken trust, of a hospitable hearth dishonoured.

"'It was dated from the inn at Haston. You know the village that lies on the high road a mile from Stromsey Hollow. I trembled, though I did attempt to dissuade him. "His honour rooted in dishonour stood."

"'He shouted for his horse. "And saddle mine, too," I ordered. He turned round and grasped my hand.

"'"Thanks, John," he whispered. "You warned me; but you stick to me in the hour of need."

"'We were soon riding hard through the park. At the great stone gates he drew rein, and looked back once more at the old house.

"'"The last of us is leaving," he murmured, "perhaps to make atonement for the past."

"'The night was clear and frosty, and the stars were wonderfully bright.

"'We rode in silence.

"'His face was very pale, and I thought his lips were moving.

"'At length we entered the Hollow. All was silent there and very dark, for the trees met over our heads on either side. It was a desolate spot a dan ill-omened, and—for my phantasy was strangely excited—alive with noiseless, moving forms. The air seemed danker and more chilly, while the wind sighed mournfully in the branches. We rode on steadily round the turning where an open track of road lay white and deserted before. It must have been close on midnigh when we reached the end of the Hollow. Of a sudden the sound of those galloping hoofs struck our ears. Clear and sharp they sounded, coming towards us over the frost-bound road. Our horses plunged in fright, trembling all over. Tony all but lost his seat.

"'"What is this?" he whispered to me hoarsely; "don't you see that cloaked figure with its pale, grinning face, riding down on us?"

"'I peered over the deserted road. I could see nothing—nothing but the waving shadows and the pale moonlight—while the horror of the advancing hoofs sounded nearer and nearer.

"'"Man or devil," cried Tony, "he shall stand me answer," and wrenched his startled horse across the road.

"'Then came the whirl of a great rush and a thunder of hoofs.

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"'My horse shied madly, and I knew no more, for I was thrown heavily and lay unconscious by the roadside. I was told later how Haston at midnight heard the charge of a runaway horse dashing up the village street. Some men rushed out and stopped it.

"'Dragged by the stirrup, disfigured and covered with blood, they found what had been Anthony, Lord Torrington. Reverently they raised the shattered corpse, and bore it to the inn, where a woman was waiting to receive it with maniac laughter.'

"John Borough finished his story, and sat silent with his face buried in his hands. I, too, sat silent, thinking deeply. Tony's fate moved me strangely, as I pondered over the similarity between our lives. We both had lived vicious, purposeless lives; we both of us had to answer for a heritage of sin.

"His fate had overtaken him, sudden and terrible; the warning of its approach had come to me. His repentance had been too tardy—too late to stay the phantom of evil overshadowing our race. Had my hour of grace also passed? The thought maddened me.

"I was doomed to go on leading my worthless life; bitter though it had become now, I had drained the cup of pleasure to the dregs, while a relentless Nemesis was hounding me to my death. This grisly spectre of sin had hunted us to the grave from father to son, and would not rest till the last of our race had paid the debt. Better to put my fortune to test and face the monster boldly, as Tony had done, than to live with this doom hanging over my head.

"If contrition would avail aught the horror would be powerless over me now as in years to come; but if nothing could atone for the past, let me meet my punishment like a man. Now was the appointed time; now let the die be cast. Mastered by this resolve, I rose to leave the room My companion started to his feet.

"'What are you going to do?' he cried; and, from the apprehension in his eyes, I knew he had divined my purpose.

"'Old friend,' I answered, 'you yourself have seen that none of our race can escape his doom. Certainty is better than this purgatory of doubt. Do not gainsay me.'

"He bowed his head.

"'Boy, you are of another branch,' he said, 'the evil spirit of the elder race may have no power over you.'

"'Then let me put the issue to the test,' I cried. 'Sooner death itself than the impending horror of the future.'

"Together we went out to the stables and saddled our horses. At the last I begged him to suffer me to meet this danger alone.

"'I was with Tony until the end,' he said simply; and I protested no more. How well I remember that ride along the lonely road under the silent stars in the tingling air! I knew that I might be riding to my death; yet never had I felt more full of life. Every turning of the road might bring me closer to my doom; yet I hurried on faster still.

"All nature was so still and peaceful that my errand seemed but the outcome of disturbed imagination. I almost imagined I was being fooled by a legend and the nightmare of a dreamer. Then we entered the gloom of Stromsey Hollow. The mystery and associations of the spot fell upon my spirits as a chill. I recognised the weird sighing of the wind, the flitting shadows, the dank air that John Borrough had described; and it needed all my resolution not to turn my horse's head and fly. My companion was riding close to my bridle arm, silent and lost in thought.

"When we passed the turning, and saw the long white stretch of road lying before us, he touched my arm.

"'This is the spot,' he said. 'There he stood. Have you the courage—or better turn while there is yet time.'

"I dismounted and flung my reins to him. I thought it would be foolhardy to risk my life on a frightened horse. Then I went and stood with folded arms in the middle of the hollow. I looked round at my companion. He, too, had left the saddle, and was standing by the roadside holding the horses' heads. I thought his face was strangely bright and hopeful and wondered vaguely what the reason of his comfort might be. How long I stood there I cannot tell. Every nerve in my body was tingling, every sense strained to painful tension. I heard nothing save the low whispering of the wind; saw nothing save wavering shadows over the moonlit road.

"At times I was so calm as almost to laugh at my mad errand; at others, the expectancy was so tense as nearly to madden me. Then, all in a moment, a chill breeze sprang up. My courage left me, and I trembled violently, for sharp and clear along the hard road rang the hurrying hoofs of an approaching horse. The sound did not strike my ears by degrees; it rang out abrupt and sudden. I strained my eyes in terror; I could see nothing. Closer and closer the gallop sounded, coming straight at me, as if the phantom horseman would ride down anything that was in his path. In a moment he was thundering down on me; I shut my eyes and tried to force my lips to prayer.

"Then came that fearful rush as of something flying past; the terrified neighing and trampling of our frightened horses, and a stifled groan. I must have swooned, for I lost consciousness and fell headlong on the road.

"When I recovered my senses all was still and peaceful as before; but by the roadside lay John Borough, cold in death, killed by a kick of his frightened horse. Perhaps the mystery of his birth was explained by his death; perhaps he was the last of the elder branch."

When the old man had stopped speaking we looked round at each other with an obviously forced smile on our faces. We saw that each of us was trying to talk of imagination and natural phenomena, and that the words stuck in the throat.

Just then the clock with elaborate effort wheezed out midnight, and the chimes rang through the frosty air. Baby woke, and crowed her "Happy New Year," kissing the old man vigorously. We followed baby's example; but our merriment was more subdued and forced than usual, for we were thinking of many things.

James Warburton.

In childhood days we played together;
I kept a shop, she came to buy;
Sometimes I was her little husband
And she would cook and make mud pie.

Ah! that was long ago and many
A country have I wandered through
To-day she's married to another
And settled down and happy, too.

Last night they had me in to dinner,
I ate a piece of pie she made—
She knows no more about pie making
Then she did when we, as children, played.

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Memorable Evening.

When the horses were made snug, William went back to the house and I followed him. He led me through a short passage into a spacious keeping room and seated me by a cheerful wood fire. The room was empty when we entered, but, in a moment, an old woman, his wife, came in and held some conversation with him. From it I gathered that a clergyman was expected soon to visit Mistress Whitgift.

Twenty minutes later a light knock came at the door and someone arrived.

"The parson," thought I, and wondered if he would come in my way. Ten to one I should know him so near home as I was.

Know him! He walked into the kitchen and I almost shouted. Doctor Willingham, Anthony Willingham, our own Doctor whom I had heard preaching steadily away in Butley church for an hour on end many and many a time.

I was ready to cry out for sheer pleasure at the sight of his cheerful, red face, grey hair, and big, silver spectacles. But I restrained myself, and resolved to test my disguise. He, alas, was in like case, for his dress bore no token of his sacred office and was that of an unprosperous drover. I had not known of late where he was, for a staunch Royalist never breathed and he had been driven from his rectory at Butley long ago and wandered at large among the Cavalier houses of Worcestershire.

He stopped and whispered to the old man, his eye on me. When he had learnt who I was he came forward. I stood up, scraped a rude bow, and offered to draw back from the fire.

"No, no, my man," said the Doctor, "keep thy seat, my good fellow. Yonder heap of oak billets will suffice to warm us two, without one retiring."

I sank down again on the settle, and he seated himself in a tall-backed chair opposite and looked at me thoughtfully.

"Dost thou use the English tongue, my friend?" asked Doctor Willingham.

"Yes, your reverence," I returned, disguising my voice as well as I could, "I speak a little English."

"That is lucky," he replied, "for the old fellow who used to march with that young lady had never a word, and I should be glad to ask thee a few questions."

"I will do your pleasure in all I can," said I.

"Ay, ay, honestly said," returned Doctor Willingham, beaming on me through his great shining spectacles.

"Has there ever a stranger arrived at Sir Arthur Vaughan's house of late?"

"There have been many strangers," I answered.

"The one I speak of," pursued he, "is a tall, straight, handsome young man, well dressed, and well mounted. Your master would call him nephew."

"Oh," said I, "you speak of Master Geoffrey Heathcote, of Butley Croft."

"I do, I do," cried Doctor Wellingham, eagerly. "Then he arrived safely among the Welsh hills?"

"He did," I answered.

"The Lord be praised for it!" cried the good old man. "I felt sure the lad had gone that way. And is yonder a sure place of refuge?"

"Better could not be," said I. "It is a wild tangle of hills which few can thread."

"Ay, ay," said the Doctor, and clapped his knee for joy.

I was perfectly satisfied with my experiment. He seemed to have no suspicion but that he was talking with a genuine serving-man, and to have deceived the man who had christened me and taught me the Catechism left me in an easy state of mind as regards other people.

"And he was safe and well when your party left home?"

"He was and is, my dear old friend," I replied in my natural voice.

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Dr. Willingham started and looked fixedly at me. I leaned forward and laid my hand upon his knee.

"Doctor," said I, "forgive me playing with you, as it seemed, but I was anxious to test my disguise I have had no opportunity to do so before, and I am satisfied now."

"My lad, my lad, my dear Geoff," cried he. "And is it you? And here? Why have you left your safe hiding place, and what do you do here in the midst of danger? And how did you come by that hurt upon your face."

"False," said I. "There is nothing under the patch." The Doctor held me by the hands which he shook again and again, then patted my shoulder, just as he did when I was a boy, next took huge pinches of snuff, and was together in a state of great excitement and wonder, at once delighted and fearful to see me there.

"Tell me everything," he said, "and I will advise you to the best of my ability."

"It is just what I wish to do," said I, and plunged at once into my story. For details I had neither time nor fancy, and in ten minutes I had put him in complete possession of the heads of my doings since I fled from Butley Croft.

I had just finished, and he was thoughtfully polishing his spectacles and ruminating upon my story, when the old man of the house came in.

Doctor Willingham looked up, and the old man spoke.

"My mistress would like to see your reverence now."

"Yes, William," he replied, "I will come at once."

He turned to me. "My duty calls me away for the moment, Geoffrey," said he, "but we shall have an opportunity of conversing upon these matters later."

He went away, the old man followed him, and I was left alone. A few minutes passed, and the door opened again. I looked up and saw Enid enter the room. Springing up, I hastened to her and took her in my arms to kiss away the tears which were falling fast.

"Oh, she is weak, very weak," said Enid, "and I fear I have done wrong in coming to distress her. She is so troubled because——"

"Because she fears she cannot render you the help you need." Enid made a gesture of assent.

"I have told her everything," whispered Enid, "She insisted, feeble that she is, on my telling her all that had happened."

The latch clicked, and we started apart, mistress and servant again. It was only Siani, however, followed in a moment by William.

The latter, helped by Siani, set out food, and we sat down at a long table, my love being placed at the top with a table cloth before her, and I at the bottom with my dish on the bare oak.

"Nay, William," said she, when she observed how the old man was marshalling us. "This is not a serving-man, as old Gwilym was. He is a gentleman, and must sit near me."

"Oh," said William, "Under a cloud, eh? My respects to the gentleman," he continued, turning a sad eye on me, "but there folk in this village who might come to this house at any minute, and trouble might hap for him were he suspected."

Upon this hint we remained as we were, and the meal was swiftly made. Enid disappeared again, Siani began to clear away the supper dishes, and the old man came and stood opposite to me in the chimney corner to which I had returned.

"My friend," said I, "who are the people in the village whom you fear?"

"Why, master," said William, "you'll like them no better than me if you be what I expect—a gentleman in trouble for the good cause."

"I am," said I.

"Why, there," he said, "then mind for yourself. The present owner of the Whitgift estates is my late master's cousin, a bitter Parliament man. No sooner is the breath out of my mistress's body, than this house is his. He has heard that she is very ill and come to the point of the death, and at this very moment, his attorney is waiting at the village inn to take possession."

This was a piece of news indeed. I, of all people, had no itching for a close acquaintance with an unfriendly lawyer, and, upon William's moving away, I stared into the fire, and mused over the situation.

I heard my name called and looked up. Doctor Willingham stood in the doorway, beckoning me. His face was very grave.

"Mistress Whitgift wishes to see you," he said.

I followed him at once and he led the way to the room where we had seen a faint light burning when we stood without.

I trod as gently as my clumsy shoes would permit me into the room and saw a silvery haired lady lying upon a bed, the curtains of which were drawn wide open. She was not very old; trouble, rather than time, had worn her out.

As the doctor led me to her bedside she opened her eyes and fixed upon me a clear, steady look. I bowed, but did not speak.

"You are Geoffrey Heathcote, of Butley Croft?" she said in faint tones.

"I am, madam," I replied.

"I knew your father," she continued, "he was a gallant and worthy gentleman. Oh, I trust you are like him."

I bowed once more. The Doctor bent over the bed. "Have no fear, Mistress Whitgift," he whispered, yet loudly enough for all to hear, "I have known him since he was born. He is a good lad, as good as gold. Fear nothing!"

The dying woman nodded, and turned her eyes on me again.

"You love Enid?" she said.

"Truly and dearly, Mistress Whitgift," I replied. "Truly and dearly."

"And you look forward to marrying her?"

"Such is my great hope," said I.

She made a slight gesture, and Enid, who had fallen back when we approached the bedside, came forward.

"And you would marry him, Enid?"

My love burnt up scarlet but said "Yes," softly.

"Then marry now," said the sick woman as eagerly as her strength would permit. "Let me see it, and know it. Marry now. I shall die the easier for it."

There was a dead pause for two or three seconds then I turned to Enid, and she lifted her eyes to mine bravely. I questioned her with a look, and held out my hand. The colour swept like a wave over cheek and throat, and she laid her hand in mine.

"We are ready," I said.

Mrs. Whitgift gave a contented sigh, and Dr. Willingham fluttered over the leaves of his Prayer Book in search of the marriage service. He looked over his spectacles and saw Siani near the door.

"Call in the people of the house," he said; "they are good hearts, true as steel—call them in."

Siani ran at once, and returned in a moment with old William and his wife. Mrs. Whitgift beckoned to the latter with a finger and whispered some directions in her ear. The woman went at once and searched in a tall press at the other end of the room and came back with a small box in her hand.

"Take it, Enid, and wear it for my sake," breathed Mistress Whitgift, faintly.

Enid, whose eyes were now fast dropping tears, opened the box, and saw a valuable ring lying within.

"Ay, the wedding ring," said the Doctor softly, thinking aloud.

"Yes, the wedding ring," whispered Mistress Whitgift.

At a word from Dr. Willingham we knelt before him, and in a low, full, deep voice he began to read the service. A stranger wedding, surely, was never seen; the dimly

lighted chamber of death; a dying woman devouring us with her eyes; a beautiful young bride giving her hand to a groom in clownish homespun, and a priest wrapped in a shabby horseman's coat.

This is as I have seen it since, in looking back upon that memorable evening; not as I saw it then. Ah, no! I had no thoughts for such trifles as the quaint figures we presented; my mind was too strongly bent on the solemn situation in which we stood at the moment.

The rite was ended, and the reverent silence which followed the Doctor's last words was still unbroken, when a sudden, sharp rapping on the door rang through the house. William ran at once, and we heard him hold a muffled colloquy with the person without. Then he returned to the room and beckoned Doctor Willingham with so disturbed and mysterious an air that I felt sure some bad news had arrived.

"What is it?" whispered the sick woman. "Let William come here."

The old man came forward and told his story in low tones.

"'Tis the landlord's wife from the 'Holly Bush,'" said he. "She slipped up, being friendly to us, to give notice that someone has carried word to yonder attorney at the inn that Doctor Willingham was seen hereabouts. And now the attorney is egging on Humphrey Brown, the constable, to come here and search the place."

"The old story, the old story," said the good Doctor, composedly.

"Go, go," said Mistress Whitgift, faintly.

"I have a piece of duty yet to perform which I would leave undone at no cost," replied he; "then it is time to talk of going," and he called for writing materials. He wrote a careful statement testifying to the marriage he had solemnised, and signed it. Next, we put our names to the document, and then Mistress Whitgift, whose earnest wish it was also to attest, was assisted by the clergyman to write her name in trembling characters. William witnessed it also, and the women signed by crosses.

"Now, leave us for a few minutes," said the Doctor, giving the paper to Enid.

We went softly out, and as we passed through the doorway, his quiet, deep voice was heard reading the last prayers.

William went to the door, and I followed him. The old man held up his finger, and we listened earnestly. No sound. He cautiously drew the bolt and peeped out. Everything was quiet, and he stepped out. I went with him, and we trod softly down to the gate which led to the road. The mist was so thick that the lights of the village were blotted out, and heavy, slow drops pattered down from the trees above. We had been watching some five minutes when a muffled trampling of feet echoed along the road.

"They are coming," whispered William, and we ran back to the house. The Doctor himself stood in the doorway.

"Haste, sir," cried William, "there's a party not a hundred yards from the gate."

Dr. Willingham hugged me tight for a moment and whispered: "If the poor lady lasts so long, I'll be here again this time to-morrow night."

And we parted. He went off as composedly as possible by a path leading through a little wood at the back of the house. He had been hunted so often that he minded it no more than an old dog fox who knows of a sure earth within easy reach.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INTRUDERS.

WE went inside at once and made all fast. The women betook themselves to the sick chamber and I settled myself by the fire. In two minutes a knocking came at the door. A parley ensued, and then William bargained to admit the constable and no one else.

"There's no other man got a right in here, and I'll have no noisy crowd trampling about the house, and my mistress on her death-bed," said William.

Humphrey Brown, the constable, agreed to this, and a moment after he walked into the kitchen, a big, broad-faced, good-humoured looking rustic.

"'Tis a thing I never looked for from you, Humphrey," said William, following him, "and my mistress as she is."

"You don't suppose, William, I'm doing this for my own pleasure, do ye?" retorted Humphrey. "There's that lawyer man been threatening me with goodness knows what because I wouldn't up and rush here twenty minutes agone."

"Thanks, good Humphrey," thought I.

"Ha' ye got the old Doctor about, William?" asked the constable in a confidential voice, "and who's yon young man?"

"I'll tell you who are in this house beside ourselves, Humphrey," said William, "and that's the mistress's good daughter, a lady come this day from Wales, and her two servants, and that's one of them."

"Ay, ay," said the other, wagging his head, "one of they poor creatures with never a word but his own outlandish tongue, I suppose. Well, William, I'll look about a bit just to please yon busybody, and say all's clear wi' ye."

They left the kitchen, and I sat and listened eagerly.

Suddenly a sharp wail came from the sick-room. The doors were open, and I caught faintly the cry, "My mistress, my poor mistress!"

"Dead," thought I. "Poor lady, she is gone," and death it proved. I heard William cry out and run to the room, and a moment after the constable trod heavily down the passage to the door. He drew the bolt, and murmured softly to someone without.

"Then I demand admittance," cried a sharp voice. "My precise orders are to take charge of everything instantly upon the decease of Mistress Whitgift. Make way!"

So far as I could learn, no one either disputed the claim or barred the way, and in bounced a small, stout, fussy man, dressed in black, and looking about him on all sides as if he expected to make important discoveries at every glance.

"And whom have we here?" he cried, pointing at me a cane which he carried. "Pray, who are you?"

I made no haste to answer, and the good-natured constable put in a word for me.

"'Tis a servant of the young lady from Wales, Master Johnson," said he, "and has never a word of our language."

This flight on the part of honest Humphrey did me excellent service, and I took care to continue mute.

The attorney paid no more heed to me as a person too insignificant for his notice, and now began to issue shrill orders and browbeat William, who, his face running with tears, had presented himself at command.

As I watched this turn of affairs with an uneasy mind, I saw Enid come in at the door and move swiftly down the room toward me. At sight of her the man of law lifted his head as if to call her to book, as he was doing everyone else, but, luckily both for him and for me, he thought better of it when he saw who she was, and let her pass with nothing more than a broad, insolent stare, for which I would have willingly buffeted him.

That she should come to give some orders to her servant was a thing natural enough, and when I stood up to listen to her, no one paid any further heed to us. We were isolated by the length of the room, and could speak freely in a low voice.

"This is dreadful," whispered Enid. "Oh! take care. If that man should suspect something? What must we do?"

"We can do nothing for the present, dearest," I replied. "It would be best for you to go to your room and keep Siani with you. We will march at early morning."

I looked up and saw the attorney edging towards us.

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Enid caught the alarm in my eyes, and said no more, but turned, and glided swiftly from the place. Master Johnson rubbed his under lip and stared at her as if meditating some remark, but said nothing till she had vanished through the doorway, and then muttered to himself: "Malignants, rank malignants, I'll warrant ye!" He looked at me as if he would dearly love to put a string of questions, but gave a vexed nod, being fully persuaded of the difficulties in the way, and turned his attention to other matters.

Several persons had followed him from the village; but he now dismissed all these, save one, his personal follower, a big, gaunt, shabby fellow, who seemed his clerk.

In company with this myrmidon, he began to march hither and thither about the house, prying and poking, and asking questions innumerable of old William. How I longed to fling him and his clerk neck and crop into the night, and chafed and chafed because I dared not!

Someone came towards me, and I looked up. It was the old servant.

"Where will you sleep, master?" said he. "The other man, Gwilym, used to sleep on straw in the stable. He liked it best."

"I am very unwilling to leave this house to-night, William," I whispered, "and those fellows about."

"True, sir," he replied; "but the attorney is going back to the inn, and has bidden me find a bed for his man."

"And where?" said I.

"I can do no more than lay him a pallet in the corner of this room."

"Then I stay here also," I returned. "Lay me some oak logs handy to keep the fire going, and this elbow chair will serve my turn handsomely; and, William, ask your wife to bid them be stirring by the first peep of dawn."

"You do well to say that, sir," rejoined the old man. "That attorney means some mischief. I heard him say to his man——"

What the attorney said I never knew, for at that moment he bustled into the kitchen, and William busied himself in mending the fire. I had seated myself in the big, comfortable elbow-chair, and I drew my hat over my eyes and feigned sleep.

"Yon outlandish fellow lacks not impudence," puffed Master Johnson, "to seat himself in the snuggest chair in the presence of his betters. Turn him out at once!"

"Turn him out yourself," said William, sourly. "I want no Welsh knife between my ribs."

"Knife, knife," cried Master Johnson. "What do you mean?"

"Pull him out of the chair," growled William, "and you'll find out. They are quick as fire, and savage as tigers."

"Weak, timorous fellow," said the attorney, pompously, but for all that he touched not my collar himself, and, ere long, took his departure. For some time again there was coming and going in the house, several women of the village being busy in the chamber of death, but at last the house sank into silence.

I woke from an uneasy slumber upon feeling myself slightly shook by the shoulder. I opened my eyes, and saw that William was bending over me with a dim lantern in his hand. The fire was dead, and the place was full of the raw chill which precedes the dawn. I shivered, and sat up in the chair.

"It wants half-an-hour to daybreak; better be moving," whispered William.

I thanked him for his kindness in calling me, and slipped toff my shoes. We passed noiselessly by the pallet on which he lawyer's clerk snored, left the house, and crossed to the stable. William hung his lantern on a nail and we began to harness the horses. While I finished strapping and buckling he went away, but soon returned with some food and I ate quickly.

"Are they ready?" I asked.

"They are doing the same as you," said William, "and will be ready when you are."

I stepped outside and looked about me as I ate. The trees shivered in the morning breeze, and faint grey streaks barred the east. At sight of that I made a speedy end of my breakfast and led out the horses towards the gate. A bunch of figures followed me in an instant from the house, and I took Enid for an instant in my arms, kissed her, and swung her up to her saddle. Siani was up at a bound, and I shook William by the hand and gave him a piece of gold. I would willingly have given him more, but, as it was, my purse went back to my pocket without a clink, and he wished us good luck and held the gate open.

"Which way?" asked Enid.

"Back again," I whispered, and she turned Whitesock's head from the village and away we rode towards Ludlow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

To Butley Croft.

When we were clear of the outlying cottages I trotted alongside Enid and, to tell all the truth, held her hand as I talked with her.

"Where are we going?" she asked, her lovely face bent towards mine, as she sat high above me on Whitesock.

"To Butley Croft," I answered.

"To Butley Croft?" she cried, her dark eyes opening great and round. "You? To Butley Croft?"

"I believe I shall be safe," I answered, and told the story of my encounter with Doctor Willingham.

"Now," I went on, "Roger Thorne and his wife will be there, for a surety, and you will be safe with them, and I, I'll make myself useful about the place, as a handy serving-man should."

"Oh, dare you trust your disguise?"

"I am carrying it to the last place where it will be suspected. The hare who returns to her form is often the best hidden."

"But so many there will know you."

"I fear nothing but my voice," I answered. "That is, above everything, the most difficult for me to conceal. I would I could act as if I were dumb."

"And you shall be as good," cried Enid. "Play your part right out, Geoffrey. You are dressed as a Welshman from the hills. Act as one. You have but to learn two words—'*Dim Saesneg*.' Shake your head clumsily and say: '*Dim Saesneg*,' 'no English.'"

I looked up into her eager face and shining eyes, and was delighted with the completeness of this finishing touch.

"Enid, dearest," I said, "you have hit on an excellent device. Everything plays to it. Come, give me the words."

I had them in two minutes. During my stay at Nant-y-Bryn I had picked up a few words and common phrases, though I could neither make up nor understand a sentence of any length, and what I knew I now rehearsed. Enid and Siani seconded my efforts with great delight, and proceeded to teach me to recite—parrot fashion—several mysterious-sounding sentences full of gutturals. Not that they expected to communicate with me in their own language, but in order that I might be able to say something to them in the presence of strangers, and so give a better colour to my assumed character. For this purpose it mattered not what gibberish I uttered, since the Welsh tongue was utterly unknown about Butley Croft.

As for the guttural, I could rasp it out a little already, and now rapidly improved under the earnest drilling I received. A village came in sight, and I sank back to my place beside the led pony.

Columns of blue wood smoke were curling above the deep-thatched roofs as we rode through the place, the clink of the hammer at the forge told that the labours of the day had begun, and peasants were moving to the fields. For

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two or three miles further the roadside was dotted with cottages, and we marched in formal order.

The beauty of the morning sank deeply into my heart. On the high stations of the hills, the spring had been cold, and stern, and backward; here, it was at its loveliest. The air was soft, and sweet, and scented; the meadows full of cowslips; the blackbird in the copse fluted his rich, mellow, careless notes; the lark, hidden in the high radiance of the dawn, poured a rain of joyous song, and the fragrant, blooming, well-ordered English countryside delighted my eyes as those of a man returned from exile.

Half way to Ludlow we turned our horses' heads to the left and rode south, but easily and loiteringly, for we had time and to spare for our day's journey. At midday we made a long halt at a solitary inn, and here I changed my last Jacobus.

There is no room for moneyless people in the wide world, and the simple truth was that I had no other resource at hand than to head for Butley Croft.

The afternoon was spent in moving at a foot pace through the mild, sweet spring sunshine by solitary bridle tracks and over wide, lonely heaths steeped in the delicious beady fragrance of the gorse, for now I knew every yard of the country, and was aiming to come to our destination by unfrequented roads, since I could not say for a certainty what reception lay before us, and wished to feel my way carefully into the place.

It wanted an hour to sundown, and we were four miles to the west of my house, crossing an undulating, furzy common. We were marching very slowly along a broad, grassy ride, when I became aware of a horseman coming rapidly up behind us.

Luckily, I had been for a long time riding in my proper station, lest we might be observed, so we had no dispositions to alter. I stared over my shoulder, and my uneasiness vanished at a glance.

"As I live," I cried, "here comes Roger Thorne, my steward."

"You will be all right, won't you?" cried Enid. "You do not fear him?"

"Fear him!" I laughed. "No more than I do my shadow. No more than I do you, and what can I say more? But soft. Ride steadily on and let us see how he will take us?"

I had no time to say more, for Roger's strong chestnut hackney was coming on at a round trot, and was soon at our heels. My stirrup leathers were drawn short on purpose, and my knees stuck up; my hat was over my eyes, I rounded and humped my shoulders, and sat the grey pony with the true slouch of a lazy groom.

As I glanced over our party I felt that we played our parts to perfection; I and the led-pony in the rear; Enid in front, looking a princess in her handsome riding-habit, and sitting Whitesock like a picture, her waiting-maid riding at her side, and a little behind.

"Roger will canter by, and I will hallo after him," thinking, in my foolishness, of myself alone.

On he came, a small, bright-eyed man of sixty, perched on his big hackney and eyeing me over with keen glance as he rode up on my left hand. I stared at him from under the broad brim of my hat and tugged it respectfully. He slightly lifted his bridle hand in return, and I kept my face straight with much ado.

The truth is, I could have hugged him. His quiet, pleasant face, and clear, brown eyes were delightful to see again, and home was in every line of him. A couple of strides carried him level with Enid, and he jumped in his saddle. Two strides again and he swung his hackney clear across the path and pulled him up dead, blocking our way.

"Stand," shouted Roger, "but fear nought. I am a true man, and I demand speech with you."

He looked round with flushed face and bright eyes, staring eagerly at Enid. She had drawn rein at once, and

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sat looking at him. The sweetness and beauty of her smile disarmed him, and he took off his hat.

"Madam," said Roger, bowing politely, "where got you that mare you ride on?"

"Pray, why do you stop our road?" asked Enid.

"For sheer wonder," replied Roger. "I see the creature that has never carried but one man in all her life—and that man my dear young master—in the company of strangers, and I must know how you got her."

"How come you to be so sure of her?" I demanded in a false voice, pushing my pony forward. Roger dropped his hand into a pocket where he had a pistol.

"Madam," he urged, "bid your man keep back. He looks a strong rogue and a masterful. I would do him no harm, but know the truth of this matter I will and must. You are a lady and kind. My own eyes are warrant enough for that. Tell me, I pray of you. And, as for me knowing the mare, why, look you, she knows me. Whitesock! Good lass. Whitesock, then! Where, where is he who rode her from these parts? From whom had you the mare, madam?"

"From her husband," I croaked.

A lovely, rosy flush shone all over Enid's face, and her eyes, brightened by Roger's appeal, were turned shyly upon me. Roger stared from one to the other with parted lips. A lady and her serving man upon these terms had he never seen before.

"And tell me, good fellow, the name of your mistress's husband?"

"Geoffrey Heathcote, of Butley Croft."

I have never seen, and never shall see again, such a picture as Roger's face presented upon hearing these familiar, yet totally unexpected words.

"My young master," he gasped.

"Oh, Geoffrey," pleaded Enid.

I drew my hat right down upon my face, then lower and lower, till my forehead, and laughing eyes were to be seen, and "Roger Thorne," said I, in my own voice.

He knew me then. He flung himself from his horse, ran to the side of my pony, and fairly held me in his arms.

"Oh, Master Geoffrey," he cried, "Praise God I see you safe and well once more. And praise God I never knew you, for your enemies will be in like case. But keep your hat well pulled down. I knew you without it, at once."

I shook his honest hand, and presented him to Enid.

"Here, Roger," said I, "is your mistress. Not even you must question her right to ride Whitesock."

"Ah, sir, you know what I meant," said he, and, with as much ceremony as if Enid and I were arriving at the house of my fathers in a coach and six, he advanced to pay his respects and kiss her hand.

Then Roger unfolded his budget of news which, in short, came to this. Sir John Postgate, attended by a strong posse, had descended on Butley Croft within six hours of my flight; but the secret of my going had been well kept, and he discovered nothing to my disadvantage.

Since then there had been much riding to and fro, and, for a while, troops had been quartered on the place. These were now gone, luckily, and the house was under the authority of the independent magistrate. He had largely removed my servants, and garrisoned the place with some of his own people, and a sharp watch was kept on all who came and went.

"We have but one weak place," said I, "Whitesock. It is for her sake that I am skulking across the common here instead of riding up Butley Street as would be the safer way of approach."

"That it would," replied Roger. "To come secretly is to set tongues wagging with a will. And there is no need for you to do so now. I will take Whitesock to Ralph's cottage in the chase, where she can be safely hidden, and do you, sir, and your party take a cast round, and ride up the street boldly."

"Ay, ay, Roger," said I, "a good plan, and the meeting with you has been lucky, indeed."

The cottage of Ralph, the keeper, lay in a secluded spot on the side furthest from the village and avenue, and far from any other house. No one lived there but himself and his wife, and their fidelity was assured.

"Old Ranger is there, too," remarked Thorne, "and that will help to keep off the people who might carry tales, for he flew out at Sir John's folk time and again, as if he well knew they were enemies; and I had to banish him, or else suffer him to be killed, and that I was unwilling to see."

Ranger was a staunch bloodhound who had watched the house by night, and I knew well his keen dislike of strangers. While Roger was talking we had been busily shifting the saddles, and I now put him in possession of the part I intended to play.

In a few minutes all was ready, and we parted, Roger riding northwards towards Ralph's cottage, while we struck across the common to the south to reach the main road well out of sight of the village. Enid was now mounted on her grey pony, and I marched on foot. Roger had carried off my sword, too, for our journey's end was in sight, and it was hardly the weapon to swing at the waist of a serving man who was about to be scrutinised by unfriendly eyes. The dusk was falling as we went up the village street, and lights were shining in familiar windows on either hand. Several people ran out to stare at us, and Adam Bell, the landlord of the village inn, peered eagerly to see if we were likely customers. But we pushed on, and turned in at the gates of the long avenue which led up to the house.

When we came to the front of the latter, I beat a lusty tattoo on the great door, and Roger came himself to open it. He received us with an excellent affectation of wonder, for one or two faces, strange to me, could be seen at the further end of the wide hall; parleyed with Enid a short time, then conducted her to the oak parlour, where a fire happened to be burning. He gave orders that I should be led to the stables, and a groom came with me. The beasts were put up, and then I followed the man to the kitchen, where of some five or six servants assembled I knew but one, an old woman, partial blind and deaf. I had need here of my catch-word at once, for an instant volley of questions was poured on me by the inquisitive crowd.

"*Dim Saesneg*," I muttered, and shook my head with a vacant stare. This brought them to a stand, and they were none so pleased, either. For the next few minutes I was the butt of more uncomplimentary speeches than I had ever heard before in my life, but I bore them with a face of uncomprehending serenity, and presently the entrance of Roger secured me better treatment. Food was offered to me, and I ate and drank, then sat in an unnoticed corner in a dozing attitude, until Roger bade me by signs—whereat there was much merriment—to follow him, and he assigned me, with excellent judgment, a cheerless garret as a sleeping apartment.

(*To be continued.*)

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THE POOR RELATION'S SHARE.

WELL, now! What is all that talk about lotteries being all humbug—all that talk about their having no drawing and no winning numbers?

On the contrary, they are an undisputable reality. So much so that it has become impossible to exchange a few words with a friend on the Boulevard on account of the number of people loudly shouting: "Here's the official list of the winning numbers of the X. lottery."

For—and this is remarkable—since lotteries have been forbidden in France there is a new one every morning.

Well and good. But do they have winning numbers? That's the capital point. Do they have winning numbers? Why, I saw one myself—and it is a very pretty thing to look at!

My neighbour had it. Therefore he won. Better than that; he drew his money. Not the capital prize, but ten thousand francs. That was a nice little amount to win, was it not?

Besides, he deserves it. He is a very nice fellow, generous, recently married to a beautiful young lady who brought him a large dowry just at the time when he was getting to the end of his string. He is a lucky dog, but an excellent fellow.

Having cashed and pocketed the amount, having spread it out under his wife's eyes, he said to her: "Listen; it's a regular windfall. We don't need it; so, if you are willing, we'll have a good time."

"Oh! yes!" said she, artlessly.

"Well, take your choice. What's it to be; the seaside or a trip to the mountains?"

The young woman, who is sensible, earnestly weighed the pros and cons, and decided upon both.

This reasoning was to my neighbour's taste. There was not a moment to be lost.

"By the way," said he, as he was going out, "I met cousin Falengois. Really, poor Falengois has no luck. He is always overwhelmed on the eve of concluding transactions which never amount to anything. But what courage he has! It was not enough for him to take care of his crippled father-in-law. His sister was left a widow, without resources and with two children. Would you believe, my dear, that he took them into his home?"

"Poor cousin!" she said with emotion.

"Let us see," he continued. "Suppose we should lay aside a part of what we have so unexpectedly received for the benefit of the poor? What do you think of giving them a thousand francs?"

The young woman appeared moved.

"Ah!" she said, "that's right! That's just like you! Ah! how I love you! How kind you are!"

"It's settled then," replied the young man. "Go to your dressmaker, and, after I am through with my errands, I'll go up to Falengois."

"It will bring us luck!" she said as a conclusion.

They met again at lunch. With all the good humour they felt at having performed a kind act, they exchanged notes about what they had hastily done during the forenoon. He would see what unique material she had chosen for her dresses.

"But, by the way!" inquired she; "what about Falengois?"

"It was impossible for me to go that far, my dear. I would have kept you waiting for lunch. But as soon as I have taken my coffee I'll leave my orders at the shoemaker and run up to Falengois." After a few moments of reflection the young man added: "Besides, I thought about something."

"What is it, love?"

"You know how he is; an excellent fellow, but so thoughtless, so weak-minded! Seeing himself suddenly with a thousand francs at his disposal, will he have the prudence, the strength of mind to use it wisely? In his interest, and on that account only, would it not be better to give him the amount in two instalments? You know how he is, love."

"You are right," replied the young woman. "In his kindness he would be capable of using the greater part of it for the benefit of those whom he supports. That's foolishness. We must guard against his weakness. If I were in your place, I would say to him: 'Here are two hundred and fifty francs, and——"

"And next month—you are right."

"Do not say: 'next month.' Do not say anything at all. Then, as he will not expect anything more, he will save what he has."

"Quite so! On leaving the shoemaker I'll run straight to Falengois. You may be sure of that."

* * * * *

"Did you go there?" she asked when, toward three o'clock in the afternoon, her husband came back, loaded with bundles.

"No," said he; "I did not have money enough about me after my purchases. You see, we were forgetting the principal thing."

"What is that?"

"A lunch box for our travels. Look at this."

And he showed her an ebony box, full of ingenious compartments. How beautiful it was! More than that, indispensable. One has not always time to leave the train to go to the buffet. This lunch box would allow them to satisfy their hunger. It was a good idea. Only, the price was rather steep.

A red-letter day it was for them. Having begun so auspiciously, it could not end in a commonplace way.

"Do you know," said the young husband; "we'll go and have dinner at some restaurant."

"All right."

"Let's keep out of the crowd. We'll take a carriage, we'll have a nice little dinner, and in the evening we'll stroll through the woods. We'll have to get ready—it's getting late!"

"Goodness gracious!" said she: "we are forgetting Falengois!"

"The dickens! That's so! For the present I'll send him a hundred francs, with a short note."

"No. It would hurt his feelings. Go yourself, my dear. It is such a delicate matter."

"Well! I'll take a cab to get through quicker. I will not delay, I assure you."

* * * * *

Three-quarters of an hour later the young man came back, looking very serious.

"You saw him?" asked madame.

"Yes!" said he with a sigh. "I am awfully sorry. It's worse than I thought. The sheriff is after him now."

"And?"

"What could I do? I thought: a hundred francs will not get him out of trouble."

"Of course not—poor fellow!"

"Then——"

"Naturally!"

"He'll do the best he can."

"Hope so! But how hard it is to help anyone!"

"Let's go to dinner."

E. CADOL.

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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YOUR ESTEEMED INQUIRY DULY TO HAND.

H. E.—Petersburg, Budapesth, and Madrid are the most unhealthy capitals in Europe. But the authorities of the last named city are now determined upon sanitary reform. A series of measures have just been decided upon, whereby sewers are to be constructed, cloths and rags disinfected, food stuffs inspected, hospitals organised, streets watered, etc. It is not before time, because from 1880 to 1887, the Madrid death-rate was 41·2 per 1,000. Since that time it has risen to 45.

OIL.—From the time the first oil well was drilled in America, in 1859, the value of the oil exported by the States is estimated to have reached the enormous figure of £300,000,000. Russia and Turkey are deriving great profits from the industry. Batoum, a miserable Turkish town, has developed in a few years into a powerful and prosperous mercantile community, exporting to India alone last year 17,000,000 gallons of petroleum, of which a million gallons went to Burmah.

SILK.—When first known to the Romans, silk was so dear that it was sold weight for weight with gold.

A. M.—Swallows take their food from the air, and they drink when flying. This, so far as is known to naturalists, cannot be said of any other bird. Various species of gnats and ephemera constitute the food of swallows upon their arrival in this country; but, as summer advances, winged beetles are also greedily taken. So rapidly does the bird capture these that, after it has been on the wing but a few moments, it has accumulated sufficient to form a pellet as large as an ordinary rifle-bullet.

J. B.—Nine million eels are annually consumed in London.

T. T.—Judges' wigs do not seem to have any other origin than the idea that they add to the dignity of their wearers. The effect that a full wig has in this direction is wonderful. Several gentlemen who on the bench strike awe into the breast of the flippant witness present the most commonplace appearance in ordinary life.

BAD.—When a Zulu child is first born it is of a light hue and does not get the darker tint of the parents for some years. As soon as it enters the world the "medicine man" is sent for. Contrary to the custom of the civilised "medicine man," he takes no notice whatever of the mother, but, devoting himself entirely to the child, makes a number of small gashes in various parts of the poor infant's body, into which he rubs medicine and goes on his way rejoicing, returning next day to make the incisions deeper and rub more medicine into them. This second operation being performed, the child is washed and dried by being moved about in the smoke of a wood fire, eventually being daubed all over with a red paint, which is renewed as fast as it wears off for a period of several months.

FANNY.—Over ten million fans are exported in one year from Canton, China.

FEET.—About three-fourths of the women of the world go barefooted, and some of the prettiest that you find anywhere are those of India and the far East. The Chinese women naturally have a pretty foot, were it not for the custom of compressing it to make it smaller than it is. The Manchu women of North China do not compress the feet, and no woman with a compressed foot is allowed in the Royal Palace.

TOMMY.—The chances of a violent death are fewer than you think. Only nine per cent. of those engaged in war are killed on the field of battle.

TALL.—An investigation was made in Switzerland a little while ago concerning the height of men in the various classes of society. The results show that on an average the students are the tallest men. Next to them come the engineers, architects, and contractors. The shortest individuals in the Republic are the tailors and employés in factories. The brewers' ample chests are more developed than those of any other class. Next to them come the masons, the butchers, and the bakers. The size of the arms corresponds, as a rule, with the development of the thorax, but, strange to say, lawyers have broad chests and thin arms. With regard to sight, the workman whose occupation is in the open air sees best, while clerks and literary men suffer most from short sight.

MODE.—In Lapland, dress fashions have not changed for 1,000 years. Fashion papers have no circulation in that country.

W.—The mechanical power of the blow from the tail of a large Greenland whale has been found to be equivalent to 145 horse-power. The width of the tail between the tips of the flanges is about twenty feet. A whale can move through the water at the rate of eight or nine knots an hour.

J. A.—If "cleanliness is next to godliness," the Japanese ought to rank very high in the moral scale, for there is no people so generally given to bathing. The number of bath-houses in Tokio is 1,200, and the average daily attendance at each is 700.

FLORA.—Florists and horticulturists have solved the problem of producing new shades of flowers in a peculiarly "scientific" manner. Instead of growing new varieties of roses, which is a process of years, they simply grow ordinary white roses and dip them in a chemical solution which, in a single hour, converts them into the most magnificent yellow tea-roses, the rare scarlet red, or the peculiar shade of bluish violet which was one of the favourites of last season. In a similar way pink roses are turned into blossoms of the deepest red.

C. C.—Nearly £70,000 has been spent in destroying locusts during the British occupation of Cyprus.

E. M.—You will find that life is extremely simple among the peasants of Roumania. The principal dish at every meal is the maize-cake. With great composure each person in his turn stretches out his right hand, and breaks off a small portion for himself. Besides this, each takes a couple of onions, a small bowl of beans, a slice of water-melon, a few unripe plums, and a draught of water. And to this frugal meal is bidden the labourer or the wayfarer, who may look as though he had no dinner. "Come—I have two onions; here is one for you." Roumanian hospitality has no limits. "I have not even a bite left for a guest," is the bitterest complaint of the poor housewife.

LOYAL.—Of all the Queen's subjects, the Norfolk islander seems to be the most loyal. The uniform question put to the stranger on landing is, "How do you do, sir? How is her Majesty?"

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AN INSPIRING STORY.

FRAIL as the human body seems to be it is a hard thing to kill. Men have lived with iron rods driven through the brain; they have lived with musket balls in various parts of their anatomy; they have been caught up by tornadoes and landed safe miles away; they have passed through almost incredible hardships and privations, and come out with lots of vitality left; they have been pronounced dead by doctors and undertakers and emerged from their coffins to work and laugh for many a year afterwards; they have (but not often) been hustled through the terrible Whirlpool Rapids of Niagara, and survived to tell of it; and as for diseases, they will outweather nearly anything named in the medical dictionaries, if they have the ghost of a show. I read of a man who successfully defended his log cabin against a whole band of savages. Only he had the women of his family to load his guns and hand them to him.

That's where it is. Nature will make no end of a plucky fight for life if only she gets a bit of help when she is short-handed and rather too hard pushed. But the help must be of the proper sort and intelligently rendered. And, sorry and sad to say! that is the kind of help so rare in the world, and generally so slow to turn up when we are laying on for all we are worth, with our back against a tree.

For instance, when our good friend, Mr. Francis Craig, had got so weak he couldn't put on his clothes, and so thin you could place an egg in each of the hollows behind his ears, it was high time for some friendly forces to rally to his aid.

"In March, 1879," he says, "whilst living at Ballinacourty, Dungarvan, I began to lose strength. I was weak, weary, and dejected, having no life or energy. My appetite was poor, and food gave me no nourishment; but on the other hand tended to irritate my stomach. My breathing was difficult, and often I had fairly to fight for my breath. My skin was very sallow, and often the whites of my eyes were yellow, as in jaundice. I was soon exhausted, and dreadfully weak; but I kept up as well as I could for a time.

"I expectorated a great deal, straining to bring up the phlegm, which was frequently streaked with blood. I was constantly spitting up a frothy fluid, and a short cough troubled me night and day. Cold, clammy sweats broke over my body, leaving me prostrate. The breathing got worse every month, and at length I could not lie in bed, but had to be propped up; *and for two years I sat up in bed.*

"Gradually I wore away to a skeleton, and shrank so much you could have placed an egg in the hollows behind my ears. I was now assisted up and down stairs; and *for three years I was unable to dress myself.* I took only light nourishment and liquid food, and gained no strength from it.

"For four years I went on like this, now better, now worse; and many times was so reduced *I thought my end had come.* I had six doctors attending me, but derived no real benefit from their treatment from first to last.

"In April, 1883, I met a friend who urged me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. I merely smiled at the suggestion, as I had no faith in its doing me any good. My wife, however persuaded me to take it and got a bottle from Messrs. Brenan & Co., Grattan Square. After taking half a bottle I could eat well and my breathing was easier. I continued with it and gained strength every day.

"In a few weeks to the surprise of all my friends, *I was walking about strong and hearty.* I was soon strong as ever I was in my life, and have since been well. You can publish this statement and refer anyone to me."—(Signed), FRANCIS CRAIG, Abbeyside, Dungarvan, County Waterford, Ireland. September 15th, 1897.

This is an inspiring story; the very thing to cheer and hearten all who have suffered long and much, and are on the verge of giving up the fight. It is nearly enough to make one fancy nobody dies save through ignorance, or non-use of this great remedy. While that is, of course, not the fact, we see how tremendous a victory may be won, even close to the churchyard gate, when the exhausted combatant is reinforced by a medicine of such potency as this one. The disease, although it nearly resembles consumption, was of the digestive organs alone. From it arose the asthma and other functional disturbances described. Mr. Craig is a retired officer of Coast Guards, and is now local Hon. Secretary of the National Lifeboat Institution, and he will pardon me for intimating that Mother Seigel's Syrup was virtually a rescuing lifeboat to him in the struggle he was unavailingly making against wind and sea.

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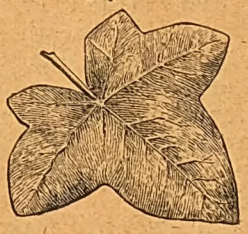

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 545. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 10TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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AND

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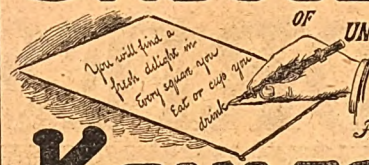

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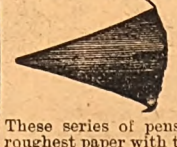

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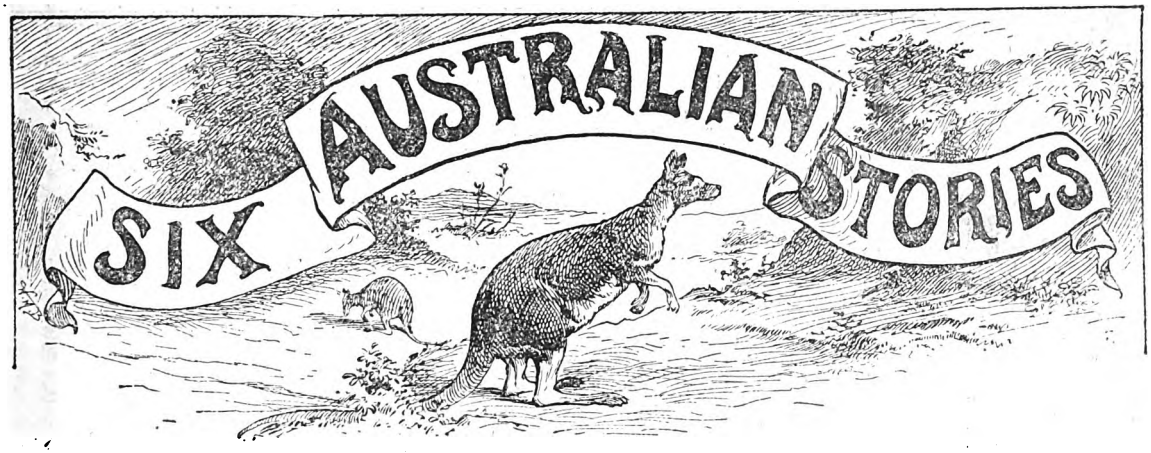

By E. MILLS.

IV.—MAZEPPA.

It was soon after the first remembered sorrow of our lives—my father's death—that Mrs. Wycherley sent an urgent invitation to Willwanda. Jack, myself, and little Susie were to spend a month at Reedy Creek, which was then the largest and finest station in the district. The Wycherleys did most things generously, some said extravagantly. The great rambling house was a paradise to young people, and it was with lightened hearts that we set out.

Jack led a packhorse, I had Susie perched in front of me, and we reached the station early in the afternoon. As we turned the corner of the long lagoon, we heard the bell peal out, and could see a cloud of dust rising in front of the culvert.

"Something's up," said Jack. "Let's canter on. They wouldn't ring the bell at that time for nothing."

But even as he spoke out of the dust came a crowd of Wycherleys on horseback. The Wycherleys were a very large family, and all who could ride were there, from big, black-haired, blue-eyed Lance to the fat, seven-year-old twins "Bob and Betty." They were upon us in a minute, all shouting and talking at once. I managed to gather that "Mazeppa had cleared out, and we were to put the pack-horse in the paddock and go out to see the fun." We had been at Reedy Creek on former occasions when Mazeppa had run away, so we were quite willing to assist in capturing her. I told Susie to hold on tight, and was soon cantering in the rear of the procession.

Mazeppa sixteen years ago had been a fat, yellow, half-caste baby. The blacks were very bad in those day, and had speared some of Lance Wycherley's cattle. In retaliation he had collected several "guns," and dispersed the camp. Dispersing meant a good deal. Very probably it resulted in sending several of Mazeppa's relatives to their happy hunting grounds. At any rate, she was found next day in a deserted gunyah, and no one ever returned to claim her.

Old Lance felt himself responsible for the orphan's welfare, and, taking her home, gave her to the childless wife of the overseer to keep. As time went on Mrs. M'Shea became very fond of the elfin baby. So, indeed, were the children at the big house. As she grew older she shared their governesses and tutors, and spent most of her time with them, and was especially the chum and companion of fair-haired Gracie Wycherley, for their ages were, as nearly as could be known, the same.

The overseer's wife read Byron, and, being particularly struck with the name Mazeppa, had so christened the child. It seemed to suit her very well. She was a queer-tempered little thing, and given to strange and sullen fits of restlessness, which always terminated in an attempt to run away. She was generally found and brought back very soon. Repentant and silent, she would then settle down and become her merry self for several months, until the wandering fit was on again. As her companions usually got a holiday from the much enduring teacher to look for her, they hailed the news of her disappearance with delight. Of late years, Mazeppa's restless fits had come seldom, so that we had unexpectedly dropped into a hunt.

Mazeppa was apparently happy. Indeed, she was the spoilt plaything of them all, and was never made to feel belonging to a despised race.

Therefore, to most people her sudden wandering fits were unaccountable. Some wild message of a freer life, whose import we could not gather, seemed to be heard by her in the wattle scented breezes. It was generally when the wattles first burst into bloom that Mazeppa went roving.

We had not far to go; the girl had only been missed a little while, and by sunset we had tracked her to a pine ridge, and seen glimmers of her white dress in the topmost branches of a pine tree.

Young Lance did not like to be reminded a few years later of the way he, with the help of Jack, attacked the giant trunk with axes, when threats and entreaties had proved vain.

Their last device succeeded, and Mazeppa came down, weeping and miserable, to be soothed and petted by Gracie, while the others raced and shouted along the forest aisles, as full of health and spirits as a stock-yard of young horses.

Did I say that in a few years Lance hated to be

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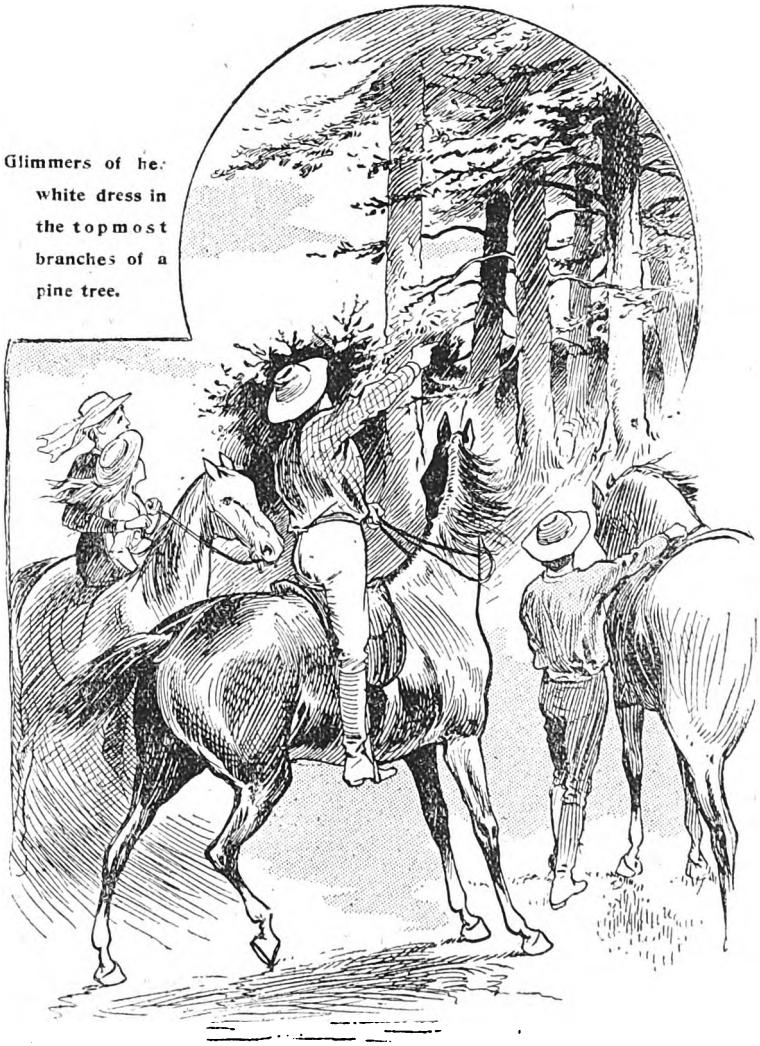
reminded of his boyish roughness? A few months, I should have said.

As the year drew to a close, Lance had put aside a good deal of his boyishness, although he was only nineteen. Gracie had her hair up, and Mazeppa, whose figure showed womanly curves that Gracie's lacked, had gone into long dresses.

I wonder if motherly Mrs. Wycherley and her bluff-kindly husband realised how very pretty the half-caste girl had grown. They always looked on Mazeppa as a plaything and spoiled pet of the household, and no one but a stranger would notice the look in Lance Wycherley's eyes. Perhaps Lance himself least of all realised that his eyes *did* change when they rested on Mazeppa. My memory of her seems always connected with the sunny corner of the verandah, where she used to sit and play with the twins; of the big sofa, with its silken cushions, in the cool flower-scented drawing-room, and a white-clad figure curled up luxuriously amongst them; of a rich, sweet voice singing weird songs; or of little useless brown hands bringing soft music, with a charm all its own, from the old school-room piano. Music was the only thing the long-suffering tutors at Reedy Creek could drill into Mazeppa's head. For other lessons and the constraint of school hours she cared not a jot, and forgot anything as soon as it was told her. She helped Mrs. M'Shea a little in the mornings before she came over to the big house—only a very little; otherwise, she was contented with the part she played in the big Wycherley household.



Glimmers of her white dress in the topmost branches of a pine tree.

Other changes had taken place. Gracie had an admirer, and it was for this reason that she lengthened her frocks and put up her hair. Although sixteen, she was still childish in figure and face, in spite of her many inches and slim waist. I looked at her admirer with awe and reverence the first time I saw him. He was a new chum, and had taken up a selection on Reedy Creek. He was not of the hard-working, money-less kind, for he spent most of his time playing tennis at the station, and seemed to have enough of this world's goods to buy Gracie boxes of chocolates such as bush girls seldom see, and all the latest books and papers. He was a good-looking, grey-eyed man, with a long, reddish-brown moustache, and he dressed well, and talked Society talk, which impressed us immensely. It was wonderful to hear him carelessly mention "Brindisi," and give his opinion of the different "liners," or begin a story with "When I was at Monaco." He made Jack and Lance look overgrown and country-fied, and he always spoke of them as if they were babes in arms—compared to himself in experience of the world. He was not by any means a good man; but that we did not know then, and it was a characteristic of the carelessness of the elder Wycherleys that he was allowed to mix so freely with the growing sons and daughters.

Mazeppa was away staying with a friend of Mrs. M'Shea's in the township when we came this time to Reedy Creek. I received most of Gracie's confidences. She quite thought he meant to propose, and so did I, for we were young enough then to think men meant all they said. He certainly paid her marked attention. Gracie was only undecided as to whether she would accept him at once or keep him waiting a year to "try his love." She went about with a proud and haughty manner, as befitted the future bride of Cecil Seymore, and was much reviled by the younger fry for her new pronunciation of words such as "brown" and "round," which she had hitherto used as if they had an "a" in them.

Lance did not like Seymour, and hinted darkly that he could not ride for sour apples. But Lance was not on the scene long, for his father shipped him off on a long droving trip before Mazeppa returned. Perhaps something had opened his eyes to the fact of his eldest son's infatuation.

On the afternoon of the day Mazeppa returned, Cecil,

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as usual, rode to the station. I was in the hammock on the verandah, and through the open French windows could see Mazeppa curled up on the sofa. Her wavy hair was lying in heavy folds against the cushions, her scarlet lips and soft olive skin set off by its inky blackness, and the long lashes were half veiling her wonderful dreamy eyes.

The white muslin clung round her like Indian drapery, and the grace of the picture struck even me, to whom it was a familiar thing. No wonder that the man who saw it for the first time stopped and gazed his fill at the pretty scene. Something in his bold yet guarded eyes struck me unpleasantly, and I tumbled ungracefully out of the hammock, and, bustling into the room, was in time to see Mazeppa's pretty confusion and start of surprise, and to make the two acquainted by a formal introduction. Then Gracie came in, her fair hair done up in a wonderful and tortuous style, and drawn primly off her low, white forehead. She was decidedly pretty, as a budding flower is pretty, with a promise of future glories, but beside Mazeppa's tropical face and womanly charms she looked but a gawky schoolgirl. I wondered if Mr. Seymour noticed it. At night Mazeppa played and sang to us, and Cecil sat silent in the canvas chair, dutifully whirling a silver-mounted horsetail over Gracie's fair head to keep away the mosquitoes.

In the days that followed Mazeppa seemed to change. The restless fits seemed gone for ever, and she was actually seen to attempt to help her adopted mother with the ironing. Mr. Seymour came as often as ever, and Gracie still posed as the haughty bride-to-be. One night she talked to Mazeppa and me about it as we sat on her bed and watched her plaiting her hair.

'Has he ever said he loves you?" I inquired.

'Gracie nearly dislocated her neck in an attempt to look at her back hair over her shoulder in the glass, while she calmly replied:

"Well, no, not exactly, but he just looks, you know, and says, 'How you will enjoy your first season in London,' and 'when you see Farnborough Manor (that's his place at home). Once he squeezed my hand' under the table, and said I was unkind when I dragged it away and glared at him."

"Of course," I said, "if he did that it is just as good; and will you let him kiss you, Gracie?"

"That depends; when we are properly engaged I suppose he might," answered Gracie as calmly as if she were discussing a picnic. "But I don't care about it much. I've only been kissed by father, whose beard is so prickly, and the boys, who hug like bears, and don't kiss nicely at all. On the whole, I think I won't allow kissing."

Then Mazeppa spoke. "If I loved a man," she said "he could kiss me for ever!"

Gracie smiled in a superior manner. "Child," she said, "no one could love a man until she was engaged to him; besides you don't know what love is."

"But I do," cried Mazeppa. "I love you, Gracie. Oh! I love you," and she sprang off the bed and rushed up to the startled Gracie, and threw her arms passionately round her.

"Of course you do," laughed the fair haired maiden; "but it is different, quite different. Oh, you impulsive darling, you have pulled all my hair down."

Mazeppa dropped her arms by her side, and walked to the window, her bosom rising and falling, her starry eyes full of a strange fire, while we two heartless schoolgirls laughed at her wild words, and at the idea of Mazeppa in love. Yet she knew, and we did not.

As time went on Cecil Seymore came oftener, and even Gracie began to notice how he haunted Mazeppa. At first she thought it was accidental; then she grew angry—not with the girl—I do not think it entered her head to be jealous of the half-caste, pretty as she was. It seemed impossible to her that any man could admire a girl who could scarcely read or write, whose hair was too short and wavy to be done fashionably, and, worst of all, who was distinctly "fat," for so we designated Mazeppa's womanly plumpness.

Make the two acquainted by a formal introduction.

No, she was angry with Mr. Seymore because he neglected her, and she showed it pretty plainly one moonlit summer's night, when he elected to escort Mazeppa over to Mrs. M'Shea's for some music, instead of taking Gracie for a row on the lagoon. She flounced out of the room in a very undignified and anything but "grown-up" manner, and, seizing my arm, dragged me by it into the boathouse to talk.

"I do not believe he is in love with me after all," she declared.

I was obliged to agree with her. "No, lovers don't behave like that," I said.

Gracie was not put out. "I'll just scorn him to-morrow and for ever," she said, "and really, Francie, I'm not sorry. It's an awful bother behaving in a grown-up way. I'm just dying to take up the tuck in my dresses again. Jack beats me always at tennis now, and I know it is only because my frock trails on the ground. I won't rest until I beat him. Jack is sensible, and I like him; in fact, if I marry at all, the man must be an

Australian! I quite decided to-day when I saw how Mr. Seymore's trousers ruckled up when he canters. Mark my words, Francie, that man could not sit a pig-root," with which sentence of condemnation Miss Wycherley gathered up her skirts and challenged me to race her to the white gate.

That same night she slept the untroubled sleep of girlhood, whilst I tossed and tossed and counted sheep, and said the alphabet back and forwards, in a vain attempt to follow her example.

It was hot, and I believe I was thirsty and hungry, for I suddenly had visions of a certain tree of Royal George peaches in the lower garden. I donned a wrapper, and, stepping through the low window, I made my way to the orchard. The moonlight was almost as bright as day, and I soon filled the pockets of my gown with my treasure trove. I was returning through the shrubbery, where sh dows lay thick, when I heard voices. I put the branches of an oleander gently aside, and was upon Mazeppa and Mr. Seymore before I knew what had happened. I drew back, for I had come on a love-scene—a real one—for Seymore held the girl tightly in his arms, and was passionately kissing her red lips.

"Disgusting," I murmured. "I've a good mind to jump out and frighten them." Then I changed my mind, for some latent womanliness softened my youthful hard-heartedness.

"She would hate me to see her," I thought, and I waited to see if they would move on and let me escape.

"You will be my own, my darling, for ever," he whispered. "I will take you away from this dull station. I will give you jewels and everything a woman could wish for. My life will be devoted to you—my beautiful, tropical flower."

His voice was shaking with emotion, and he looked like a lover in a picture.

Mazeppa's voice was low, and strangely altered as she replied: "Love you? Ah, you know it. You have always known it, but it is Gracie you must marry—she loves you; she will be engaged to you!"

Cecil swore a little under his breath, and then laughed. "What a child you are," he said. "As for that skinny, prim, yellow-haired little prude—could I kiss her as I kiss you, sweetheart?"

I wondered if I ought to cover up my ears, and not listen to any more rubbish, but I was curious to hear what Mazeppa had to say.

"If I was not here you would love her," she said with conviction.

"Nonsense," he replied. "Forget her and talk of yourself. Promise me that you will come away with me when I go to Sydney at the end of this month. Three weeks more, Mazeppa—only three weeks—and then you must be mine—altogether. Do not say anything about it until I give you leave. Will you promise, beloved?"

Mazeppa was dumb even to this passionate pleading, and did not answer.

"Then you do not love me?" he said mockingly.

At this Mazeppa gave a low, strange cry and flung her arms round his neck, bending the fair, closely-cropped head down until it rested on her shoulder.

"Love you?" she said. "Ah, you know, you know!"

This was too much for my feelings! I stole back to the orchard, and going all the way by the kitchen-garden, I reached our bedroom, meaning to wake Gracie and unmask the traitors. And Mrs. M'Shea will scold when she finds Mazeppa has stayed up so late, I thought. Gracie was sleeping so quietly, I decided to let my news wait until morning. Then I fell asleep, to be awakened by what seemed to my drowsy senses to be a white ghost that crept softly to Gracie's bed and kissed her, and cried softly over her, or was it only in a dream that I heard Mazeppa saying: "Good-bye, good-bye," with a sound of tears?

It was not until the evening of the following day that Mrs. M'Shea became uneasy, and walked over to the big house to ask Mazeppa to come and help her

Seymore held the girl tightly in his arms, and was passionately kissing her red lips.

with the ironing. The girl as often as not slept in one of the spare beds at the big house, instead of going home.

Of course, we could only tell her that Mazeppa had left us early the night before. As for Mr. Seymore, he had taken his departure immediately after breakfast; not at all disturbed, apparently, by the chilling scorn of Miss Grace Wycherley and Miss Francie Farrar. There was no doubt in everyone's minds that Mazeppa had gone—"wandering," and had this time an uncommonly good start. But my mind misgave me, and I decided to tell Mr. Wycherley all I knew, with the result that he rushed off to Mr. Seymore's selection, and thus lost two good hours.

Mr. Seymore owned up shamefacedly to his moonlight love-making, but swore he had left her safely at the house, and he urged Mr. Wycherley to

start out a search party at once. Mr. Wycherley called him a scoundrel, but took his advice, and the two men galloped back to the stat on to set matters going. It was plain to all of us what the strange, complex-natured girl had done. The clue lay in her words: "You would love Gracie if I were not here." Gracie cried bitterly, and so did I, for we both felt that this was no ordinary flitting.

"They will never find her," I said. And they never did.

A fearful storm came up, and the floods of rain obliterated her tracks, which trended towards the scrubs that swept up the ranges. In those days the blacks about Reedy Creek were still in large numbers. Sometimes we thought Mazeppa had joined them, her mother's people, and was living with them amongst the granite hills, but Mazeppa, with her dainty ways, her love of luxury, it could not be. Sometimes we thought she had drowned herself, and been swept down in the flooded gullies after the fearful storm. Or, again, that she had been hiding quite near, and had, with Seymore's help, got to Sydney. But that could scarcely be, for Cecil Seymore helped long and earnestly in the search. As time went on, his ardour cooled, and he looked distinctly relieved when it was at last declared hopeless. Reedy Creek Station became a house of mourning. Poor Mazeppa, with her beautiful face, and strange, unformed childish mind, and untamed nature, there was little about her to hold a man like Seymore.

Once gone she was forgotten. Old Wycherley could not forgive or forget, and Cecil Seymore found it convenient to sell his selection, and take his departure from the district, and finally from the colonies.

Even to Lance, as the years went on, bringing other loves and other interests with them, the girl became but as a tender, regretful memory, and when the name of Wycherley (as the result of the big drought) was no more heard in connection with Reedy Creek, sweet Gracie, far away from the scene of the poor, mistaken child's flight, allowed Time, the healer, to console her also. She will never forget Mazeppa, but remembers her only as we remember the dead.

There are a wrinkled, white-haired woman and an old man, whose working days are over, who still inherit the overseer's cottage on Reedy Creek, though owners and managers rise, decline, and fall, and in their hearts the half-caste's memory is still green, for they nightly place a flaring fat lamp on the gate-post to show Mazeppa "home" again.

North Knowing.—When travelling on the railway always take a seat just in front of a fat old gentleman. In case of a collision, he breaks the hurt wonderfully.

The Queen of Italy employs a lady physician. Whenever the Queen feels a little out of sorts she sends for her physician, and the two talk about the latest fashions. This is a medicine that will cure almost any woman.

The value of literature entirely depends. If a book has a calf-skin cover it is valuable as a razor-strop. If it is thick it comes in first-rate to put under the corner of a chest of drawers which has lost a leg. If it has a clasp on that will keep it closed, it cannot be eclipsed as a missile to hurl at a dog. If it has a large cover like a geography, it is as good as a piece of tin to nail over a broken pane of glass. If it belongs to somebody else it is a convenient article to hold up a window.

Antiquarian: "The custom of throwing the slipper after a bride comes down from very ancient times. Long before the Christian era, a defeated chief would take off his shoes and hand them to the victor, to show that the loser of the shoes yielded up all authority over his subjects. So, when the family of a bride throw slippers after her they mean that they renounce all authority over her. Do you understand?"

Small Auditor: "Yessir. They throw away the slippers they used to spank her with."

How rapidly a man loses all interest in politics and national finance when he shuts the door on his own thumb.

Mr. Grump: "I can't see, my dear, what good that border of fur does you round the hem of your skirt."

Mrs. Grump: "Why, it shows that I can afford it."

At a charity fair in Berlin the Empress of Germany has been selling sausages at £3 apiece and sponge-cake at 10s. a slice. Any man who will mix sponge-cake and sausage ought not to haggle about the price.

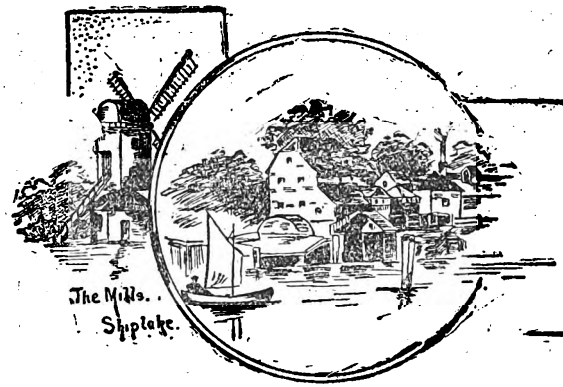
The tomato may be grilled, as well as a Christian saint, and the fact seems to lead to some confusion. Example:

Teacher (at a night school in the East-end of London): "Can any of you boys tell me what a martyr is?"

Street Arab (after a long pause): "Please, sir, it's a red shiny thing as yer buys on a Saturday night."

An Idea that may be Turned to Account by English Artists.—A very great French artist who has never "exhibited" at the Paris *Salon*, and who never will, tells an excellent story. It appears that one of his young disciples, fond of being puffed, sent his pictures by a porter new to him, but who happened to be a model of the good old times.

"Shall I take them sandwich-fashion, monsieur?" asked the man. "They might be refused, and my doing so would, at any rate, give the public a chance!"



KISMET.

ALL day long the heat had been overpowering. In spite of sun helmets of the latest pattern, and karkee jackets warranted to keep out the heat, many cases of sunstroke had been reported, and even the camels seemed to be thankful the cool of evening was upon us, as they lay in long lines, lazily munching their allowance of burzeem.

Most of us were extended full length on the sand, only the more energetic were sitting on cases of tinned meat or regimental stores. We were all enjoying the fragrant weed, and as we watched the smoke ascend towards the otherwise cloudless sky, we were chatting amongst ourselves or telling yarns for the benefit of the general circle. Only one of our number seemed dull and out of sorts, and we rallied him on his want of spirits.

"You are funking to-morrow, Snapper," said one young fellow, raising himself on his elbow, "otherwise you would be more expansive. This scene," he continued, with an airy wave of his pipe to a group of palm trees, "is enough to inspire the most unromantic person."

The individual addressed as Snapper was a good-looking, well set-up man, who had earned this nickname through his love of photography, and the fact that he carried a snap-shot camera with him wherever he went.

All through the campaign Snapper and his camera had been ubiquitous.

He had calmly taken photos in the very thick of the fight, for he was not a soldier like the others in that group, but a war correspondent, and one who was known to be wherever there was most danger, regardless apparently of life and limb. Hence the youngster's sally of his funking next day's battle caused a gurgle of laughter from his comrades.

"I tell you what it is," said Major Sands, as he relit his pipe, "we shall have our work cut out for us to-morrow; these dervish Johnnies fight like the devil."

"They all so firmly believe in Kismet," said another. 'They think if Allah wills them to be killed they will be killed, and if he wishes them to live nothing can harm them."

"Not a bad idea, you know," observed Captain Hinton. 'I believe I rather think that myself, only in a different way."

"Certainly, when one hears of the hairbreadth escapes some men have, it really looks as if there was something in it," put in young Saunders, the man who had rallied Snapper on his silence.

"I knew a fellow who had gone all through the Indian Mutiny unscathed, and as he was going on board ship to come home slipped over a coil of rope, fell into the hold, and was killed in a most prosaic way," remarked Major Sands. "No honour or glory about that. He had always been unlucky, so everyone said, 'Just like his luck.' But, of course, it was Fate."

"We seem to have got on a nice cheerful subject," said Snapper gloomily. "Can't someone give us a song, or else talk about something more lively?"

"We are not musical, dear boy," replied Saunders. "In fact, I may say, without undue prejudice, that as a regiment we could not sing a song amongst us."

"Here's a funny thing," said Maclaren, who had been reading a newspaper some weeks old. "A fellow writes that he was staying at a haunted house, and took his camera with him."

"It might have been you, Snapper," interrupted the irrepressible subaltern.

"Well," continued Maclaren, "he took photos of several of the rooms, and when the plates were developed people were distinctly visible sitting or standing in these same rooms, though the photographer swears that when he did the pictures the said rooms were absolutely empty."

"Must have dined I should think, and stood in front of the camera himself, forgetting he had the cap off," suggested Major Sands, prosaicly.

"I think it extremely likely that what he states really did happen," remarked the correspondent.

"Oh, come, Snapper, draw it mild, we have all heard you discourse on the marvels of the camera, but you are not going to make us believe that it can take things which are not there. Probably the whole thing is invented by the paper to bring about a correspondence in its columns. They most likely think they will get the Psychical Society to take up the question. They are always delighted to find a new ghost or spirit knocking about."

"Well, you fellows can believe it or not, as you please, but I do, for I know how wonderful is the sensitiveness of the camera lens. I myself have had things happen to me in that way only lately which makes me quite creepy when I think of them."

Snapper paused to refill his pipe, and then continued, "If you care to hear it I will tell you why I have felt so depressed and dull these last few days. It is all the result of a photograph I did a short time ago."

Most of his listeners raised themselves to a sitting posture and all prepared to listen to the yarn, for Snapper was a raconteur of the first water, was generally interesting, and seldom dull.

"Fire away!" commanded the Major. "'Tention all. Snapper's to have the floor, or rather the sand of the desert."

"About a week ago," commenced Snapper, "I was strolling vaguely about, camera in hand, when I came upon a bit that struck my fancy, simply from a pictorial point of view—a group of date palms, and close by some camels lying down resting. The cloudless blue sky, the palms, camels, and the desert struck me as being so purely Oriental a scene that I took it, a though I had determined as I was running short of films not to expose any on what I might call useless subjects. The drivers of the camels were nowhere to be see, and I should like you to specially mark this point."

"Marked it is," quoth Saunders, making a cross on the sand with his finger.

"Now, when I came to develop the plate, an extraordinary thing happened, for there were distinctly visible two figures. They came out quite clear and strong, not in the faint way a doubly exposed plate usually develops. I was so struck with this that I printed the picture, and found to my horror that one was a recumbent man, and that man was myself, but my throat was cut apparently from ear to ear. Beside me stood, or rather appeared, almost to be executing a sort of war dance, a huge dervish brandishing a long knife. I don't mind telling you fellows I felt rather queer. Taking one picture on the top of another could not possibly account for this. Puzzle over the matter as I would, I could arrive at no conclusion on the subject.

"Since my arrival in Egypt I have heard so much about Kismet and fate, that I really begin to wonder could it possibly be a warning of some sort. For the first time in my life I am in a funk, a real blue funk, about to-morrow's fight, for I have the oddest presentiment that I shan't see Old England again, and—— Well, you fellows know, I am engaged to the dearest little girl in the world."

His voice gave a suspicious tremble, and if we had not known him to be the pluckiest, as well as the most light-hearted of men, we would have suspected a rather queer moisture about his eyes.

"My dear chap, you are hipped," said Captain Hunter. "Buck up man, this climate *is* a bit trying to the liver."

"Makes me beastly depressed at times," remarked Maclaren, "I have felt it myself often. It is the sun and the sand, and everything," he added vaguely.

Hamilton alias Snapper did not answer for a moment; he was turning over the leaves of a large pocket-book.

"Here it is," he announced presently, and handed a photograph to the man next him.

Strong, brave man as he was, he visibly paled under his tan as he looked at the picture.

"How horrible," he muttered quite involuntarily. "It is exactly like you."

He passed it on to the Major, and so round on the group. With the exception of a few half-repressed murmurs, it was received in silence.

"It is the most extraordinary thing I ever saw," said Major Sands at last. "I wish you would let me keep it if you don't want it."

"I can't say I do," replied Hamilton. "The thing has got on my nerves, and I am glad to be rid of it"

"Probably some quite prosaic thing would explain it; if we only knew perhaps it is a picture of a battle, only two figures coming out," suggested Saunders, "and the likeness to yourself accidental."

"No, I don't think so," quietly responded Hamilton; "I am almost positive I took the film from a fresh batch."

"Well, we had better turn in if we are going to get any sleep," observed Captain Hunter; and most of them took his advice and went off to their tents. Only Major Sands remained behind with Hamilton. The latter suddenly spoke:

"Look here, Sands," he said, taking two letters from his pocket, "you and I have been rather pals during the campaign, in fact, I look upon you as my best friend, and I don't know anybody else I would like to trust with these. Of course, these fellows thought I was yarning, but I have such a foreboding that it will be all up with me to-morrow, that I want you to take these two letters, and send them the first opportunity you have if I don't turn up after the battle. One is to my next brother. You know I have a little property in Scotland, and he will succeed, of course, but I want him to look after one or two people I am interested in, and also I was foolish enough to make no provision for my mother. He is a good lad, and I know he will follow my advice and count my requests as law. The other, the other," there was a perceptible shake in his voice, "the other is to Elsie. When you go home, old man, you might see her and tell her my last thought was for her. Tell her, also, that if at any time she finds she could care for another, and that other is worthy of her, she is not to let thoughts of what might have been stand between her and happiness. Will you do this for me, old fellow, in the event of anything happening?"

Sands wrung his hand.

"My dear chap, I sincerely hope that it will be unnecessary, but if such an unlucky thing as you fear should take place, you may depend on me. I will look after her for you."

"Tell her you were my greatest friend, and that she can trust you always," said Hamilton, as they were parting for the night.

* * * * *

The next day Khartoum fell. Kitchener and his victorious army had routed the dervish horde. Wonderfully few were our losses, but, alas! there were still enough to cause many aching hearts at home. Among the slain lay Hamilton, his camera beside him. A shot had reached his heart, which was evidently the cause of death, but his throat had been cut—as in the photograph he had shown us—from ear to ear, and a dervish, wounded himself, was dancing a weird fantastic dance by his body, brandishing a knife dripping with blood, when we found him.

Very reverently Snapper's friends carried him into camp, and, with a sad heart, Major Sands dispatched the two missives to England. He inclosed with them each a letter from himself. Alas! he could not assuage the grief which it would carry into two homes; but, at least, he could soften it. Very sympathetically, in a few well-chosen words, he told Hamilton's beloved how his last thoughts had been of her, and how his last words had commended her to his care.

Later on, when the war was practically over, he was invalided home.

He did not find his bequest an irksome one at all, and, though Elsie still mourns Hamilton sincerely and deeply, I think, could he see what is going on below, that he would be the first to rejoice that Major Sands thinks he cannot take care of his legacy better than by marrying her, and as he tells Elsie of Hamilton's last words, she trusts him by giving him herself for always.

MAUD CRAIGIE HALKETT.

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From Prairie and Backwoods.

XI.—Trouble in the Cañon.

ONE time this yere Cherokee Bill and Dan Boggs is a-coming in from Tucson on the stage. Besides Cherokee an' Boggs, along comes a female a close herdin' of two young ones—which them infants might have been stingin' lizards, an' every one a heap heavier—an' sorter in charge of the whole outfit is a long, lean man in a black coat. Well, they hops in, an' Boggs and Cherokee gives 'em the two back seats on account of the female an' the yearlin's.

"My name is Jones," says the man in the black coat, when he gets settled back an' the stage is going, "an' I'm an exortin' evangelise an' I plucks brands from the burnin'."

"I'm powerful glad to know it," says Boggs. "Them games of chance which enjoys public notice in this yere clime are some various, an' I did think I shorely tests 'em all; but if the device you names was ever open in Wolfville I overlooks the same complete."

"Pore sinkin' soul," says the black-coat man, "he's a-floundering in the mire of sin. Don't you know, my perishin' friend, you are bein' swept downward in the river of your own sinful life till your soul will be drowned in the abyss?"

"Well, no," says Boggs, "I didn't. I allows I was makin' a mighty dry ford of it."

"Lost, lost!" says the black-coat man, a-leanin' back plenty hopeless. "It is a stiff-necked generation an' sorely perversed a lot."

Well, the stage jolts along two or three miles an' nuthin' being said. The black-coat man he groans occasionally, which worries Boggs, an' the two infants, gettin' restless, comes tumblin' over onto Cherokee an' go searchin' of his pockets for mementos. This yere is about as pleasant and refreshin' to Cherokee as bein' burned at the stake, but the mother she leans back an' smiles, an' of course he's plumb helpless. Finally the black-coat man p'ints in for another talk.

"What is your name, my poor worm?" says the black-coat man, addressin' of Boggs, "an' whatever avocation has you an' your lost companion?"

"Why," says Boggs, "this yere's Hall—Cherokee Hall. He turns faro in the Red Light; an'," continues Boggs, a-lowerin' of his voice, "he's as squar' a man as ever counted a deck. Actooally, pard, you might not think it, but all that man knows about a cold deck or dealin' second, or any such sinful schemes, is just mere tradition."

"Brother," says the female, bristlin' up an' tacklin' the black-coat man, "don't talk to them any more. Them's gamblers, an' mighty awful men," an' with that she snatches away the yearlin's like they was contaminated.

This was some relief to Cherokee, but the young ones howls like coyotes an' wants to come back an' finish robbing their victim, but the mother, she spanks 'em, an' when Boggs was goin' to give 'em some cartridges outen his belt to amoose 'em, she sasses him scandalous, and allows she ain't needin' no attention from him. Then she leans back an' snorts at Cherokee an' Boggs mighty contemptuous. The young ones keeps on yellin' in a unmelodious way, and while Cherokee is ca'm an' don't seem like he minds it much, Boggs gets nervous, and finally lugs out his bottle, aimin' to drink a lot an' compose his feelin's, which they was some harrowed by this time.

"Well, I never," says the woman. "I shorely sees sots before now, but at least they has the decency not to drink before a lady."

This stampedes Boggs complete, an' so he throws the bottle outen the stage an' don't get no drink.

After awhile the stage strikes into the upper end of a dark, rocky cañon. This yere cañon was about two miles long, an' was lately reckoned some bad. Nuthin' had every happened on the line, but hese yere was the days when Victoria an' his Apaches was cavortin' round plenty loose, an' as Gen. Wilcox had done run 'em outen the Floridas over in New Mexico about a month before, it was mighty possible they was a-layin' somewar in the hills along the trail to Tucson. If they ever gets a notion to stand up the stage, they was shore due to do it in this yere cañon, wherefore Cherokee an' Boggs an' old Monte, who's drivin', regards it plenty suspicious.

"Send 'em through on the jump, Monte," says Cherokee, sticking out his head.

So the six hosses lines out at ten-mile gait which

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rattles things around a whole lot, an' makes the black-coat man sigh, while the young ones sets up some appalling shrieks. The female gets speshul mad at this, thinkin' as how they're playin' it low down on her fambly, but she takes it out in cuffin' the yearlin's now an' then, just to keep 'em yellin', an' don't say nuthin'.

Well, the stage gets about half way through the cañon when all at once up on both sides in the rocks about twenty Winchesters begins to hop an' jump mighty permiscus, the same goin' hand in hand with whoops of onusual merit. With the firs' shot old Monte begins pourin' the whip into the team, and them hosses goes into their collars like six lions. It's plenty lucky aborigines ain't no shots. They never seem to get the phelosophy of a hind sight none, an' generally you can't reach their bullets with ten-foot pole. The only thing got this time is Boggs. About the beginnin' a little cloud of dust flys outen the shoulder of his coat, an' his face turns pale an' Cherokee knows he's creased.

"Did they get you har, old man?" says Cherokee, some anxious.

"No," says Boggs tryin' to brace himself. "I'll be around in a second. I wishes I had that whisky once I hurls overboard a minute back so graceful."

Well, the Injuns was mighty consistent, an' comes tumblin' down onto the trail an' gives chase, a shootin' an' a yellin', a heap zealous. As they was on foot an' as the 'bus was makin' good time they could jest manage to hold their own in the race, about forty yards to the r'ar. Finally Cherokee, after thinkin' a second, says straight out to Boggs:

"This yere is the ways I figgers it. If we keeps on this way these Injuns 'll shore run in on us, a half mile further on a' the ford. hey're due to down a hoss or Monte—may be both—in which event the stage shorely stops, an' it's a fight. This yere bein' troo, an' as I'm elected for a fight anyhow, I'm goin' to hop outen the stage right yere and pull on the dance myse'f. This'll stop the chase, an' to tell the fact, it's about the only chance in the box this yere poor female an' her offsprings has to live a little bit, an' I'm goin' to play it for 'em, win or lose."

"Them's my notions," says Boggs, a tryin' to pull himse'f together; "shall we take this yere he shorthorn along?" an' he p'ints where them four tenderfcet is mixed up together in the back of the stage.

"He wouldn't be no earthly use," said Cherokee, "an' you're too hard hit, Dan, yourse'f. So jest take my regards to Enright and the boys, an' smooth this all you know for Nell, an' I makes the trip alone."

"Not much," says Boggs; "my stack goes into the centre, too."

But it didn't, though, 'cause Boggs had bled a heap more'n he thought, an' the first move he makes he tips over in a faint. So Cherokee picks up his Winchester, an' openin' the door of the stage jumps clean free, an' they leave him th'ar on the trail.

Well, the stage comes into Wolfville, ten miles further down, on the lope. Boggs is still in a faint and about bled to death, while them exhortin' people is shorely outen their minds. Well, in no time a dozen of us lined out for Cherokee. Did we find him? Well, I should say we shore found him. They'd got one bullet through his laig an' there he was, with his back agin a rock wall an' his eyes a-glitterin', a-holdin' the canon. O' he was a mountain lion, every time. There never was no Injun gets by him. Of course they all runs when they hears us a-comin', so we don't get no fight.

"I hope you hails one, Cherokee," says Enright, "playin' even on this yere laig they shoots."

"I win once, I think," says Hall, "over behind that big rock to the left."

Sure enuf he's got one Injun, too dead to skin, an' coming along a little further, Booth finds a second.

"Yere's another," said Booth, "which makes even on Boggs."

"That's right," says Cherokee, "I remember now; there was two. The cards come some fast one time, an' I over'ooked a bet."

Well, we gets Cherokee in all right, an' next day around comes the female tenderfoot to see him.

"I wants to thank my preserver," she says.

"You ain't under no obligations whatever, marm," says Cherokee, raisin' up a little in the bed, while Farc Nell puts another goose ha'r pillow under him; "I simply prefers to do my fightin' in the cañon to doin' it at the ford, that's all. It was jest a matter of straight business—just a preference I has. Another thing, marm, I know you'll excuse it, seein' I'm a single man an' onused to childish ways, but I was mighty glad for an excuse to get away from them blessed children of your'n."

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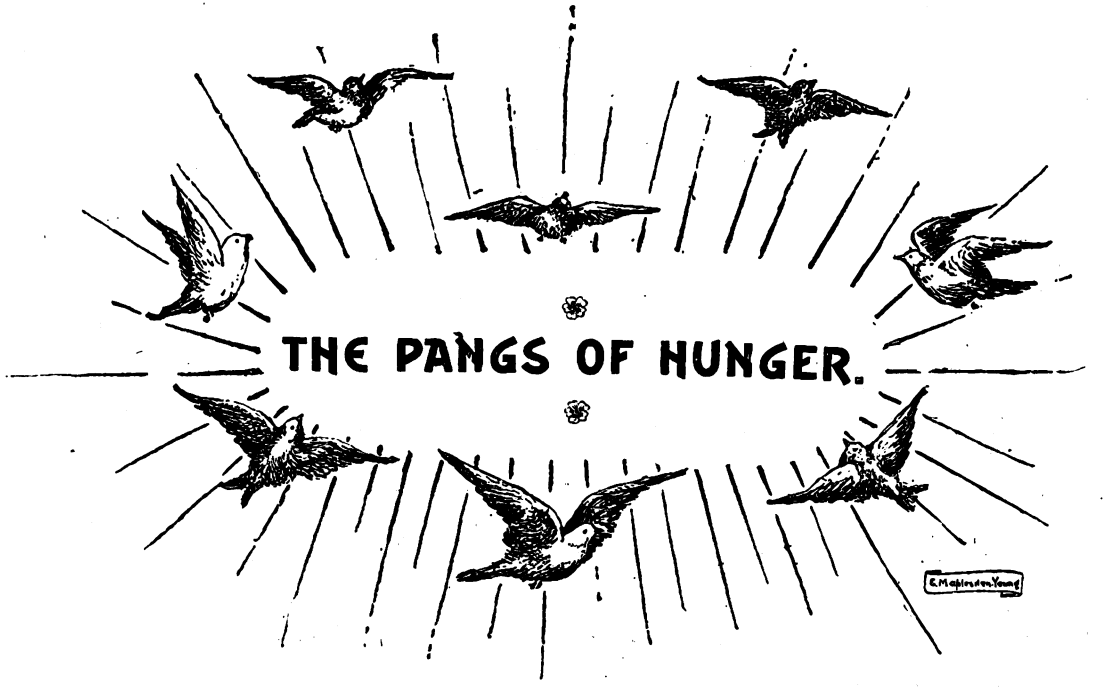

How well I remember that winter morning—clear bright, and bitterly cold as a daydawn at the Northern Pole. The children were cross and shivering in their nursery, for, of course, by one of those fatalities which seem to crowd upon the course of housekeeping, the fire had been allowed to go nearly out.

Bridget was scolding over cracked water pipes in the kitchen, and John discovered three buttons off his shirt, while I was trying in vain to brush the tangles out of little Lilla's hair.

Everything seemed to go wrong and I was almost ready to cry, when at last breakfa t was announced, and the fragrance of coffee and bacon began to act like a balm upon my perturbed spirit.

Lilla was dancing on the rug before the fire, the baby, tied in his high chair in front of a mug of milk, laughed and crowed, and John was just reading out from the newspaper one of those grotesque paragraphs which make one laugh whether one will or not, when Bridget peeped round the corner of the door.

"Please, ma'am," said she, "would yez give me a bit o' mate and a bowl o' coffee for a poor woman at the door?"

"No," said I, my face growing frigid in a second. "There is no sort of charity so foolishly bestowed as things given at the door."

John glanced mildly at me.

"Food and drink, my dear," said he, "can scarcely be misappropriated."

"But Mrs. Fuller told me that she gave a breakfast to a beggar man one morning last week at the door, and the house was besieged all day by a regular succession of tramps. They've a sort of telegraphic communication among themselves. And I subscribe to the St. Villanova Alms District, and all the church charities, and I do not intend to commence the winter by harbouring all the wretched creatures who come to the basement door. Tell the woman, Bridget, to go about her business."

"But she says she's hungry, mem."

"Tell her, I say, to go about her business," I reiterated sternly.

Bridget withdrew, muttering something under her breath. Little Lilla looked hard at me; John went on with his newspaper, wearing rather a grieved and troubled expression of countenance, and I poured out the coffee, with a Spartan sense of having done my duty. Nothing more was said on the subject, and I was dressing to go out at about eleven o'clock, when Lilla looked up from her toys.

"Mamma," said she; "it must be awful to be hungry, mustn't it?"

"Of course," said I; "but why?"

"Oh, nothing," said Lilla, balancing one block on top of another. "Only I was thinking of that poor woman Bridget sent away. Bridget said she cried."

"Nonsense!" said I irritably; "I do wish Bridget wouldn't talk so foolishly."

So I tied on my hat, folded my new shawl luxuriantly round my shoulders, and set forth to the other end of town to do a little shopping.

Or a good deal, rather. It was near the holiday times, and I had a long list of odds and ends on my memorandum, so that it was long past my regular lunch time before I had suited myself with the various items, and I began to feel famished.

"I'll go to Bunton's for my lunch," said I to myself. "A nice omelette will be exactly what I want."

So I went in and sat down at one of the tiny, damask-covered tables and gave my order. Just, however, as the waiter was entering it in his little book, I chanced to put my hand in my pocket for a handkerchief, and to my ineffable amazement and chagrin, my purse was gone.

Some of the light-fingered gentry who haunt the streets of London like shadows had relieved me of every penny I had.

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I rose hurriedly up.

"It doesn't matter," said I, waving my hand to the waiter; "you need not take my order. I—I will not lunch here to-day."

The man looked at me as if he thought I must surely be crazy; but I got out of the restaurant as fast as I could, tantalised, all the way, with the fragrant plates of soup, delicate salads and deliciously smelling tea and chocolate which the little groups of ladies were discussing all about me.

Here I was in London, with nearly two miles to walk, not a farthing in my pocket, and nearly famished.

I even found it in my heart to envy the little street Arabs who were munching hard apples under the shelter of doorways. On the whole, I think I was never so hungry in my life.

The short winter afternoon was drawing to a close as I dragged myself wearily along the pavements, looking with longing eyes into the windows of the restaurants and confectioners. I could almost have snatched from a school-girl who tripped along, the bun which she was eating.

And all of a sudden Lilla's words flashed across my memory:

"Mamma, it must be awful to be hungry, mustn't it?"

The tears came into my eyes.

"Could it be possible," I asked myself; "that this was a judgment upon me for my own harsh decision of that morning? My tribulations were a mere accident; but the poor woman who had been turned remorselessly from my door had no prospects of anything else."

The 'buses rumbled past; the cabs went by; and I, wearied in every limb, was unable to avail myself of their aid. It was dark when at last I reached home.

I threw myself, completely tired out, on a lounge in front of the fire.

"Bridget," said I, "bring me something to eat, quick I am almost starved."

The girl looked at me in amazement.

"Sure, it'll be dinner in an hour, ma'am," said she.

"An hour!" cried I impatiently; "I can't wait five minutes. Bring me a cup of tea, a slice of toast, a plate of soup—anything you have."

Bridget went out, and presently I heard her voice raised high in altercation with someone in the kitchen.

"She turned a starving woman away from the door this morning," said she. "Let her see now how she likes it herself."

"I won't go! I won't go!" said I; and I felt myself being pushed out into the twilight, when the dizzy shower of snow was beginning to fall like a host of dim white spectres fleeing through the air. But all my feeble efforts were unavailing; the deadly chill seemed to strike to my very heart. I was just falling on the threshold when Bridget's voice sounded in my ear.

"Bless and preserve us, ma'am! Is it dreamin' ye are?"

She had come in with a plate of hot tomato-soup, and found me rolling on the floor.

"Bridget," said I, as I sat up and took the bowl from her, "I did wrong about that poor creature, who came begging to the door this morning, when we were at breakfast. Hereafter, never send any one empty away, as long as there is a crust in the cupboard or a bone in the pantry."

And Bridget answered with emphasis:

"Sure, ma'am, I never will."

AMY RANDOLL.

A FORTUNATE MISTAKE.

I.

I WAS only a young man then—twenty-six—just married, and with a reputation to make. At that time the whole detective staff were engaged on the mysterious Smith case, which you no doubt remember. No?

It was this: Miss Smith was a wealthy old lady who lived on the outskirts of Windsor. She was eccentric, but generous, and lived alone with a man and his wife as servants, whom she treated very kindly.

One morning the female servant, almost dead with fright, crawled into the Windsor Police Station with the intelligence that thieves had broken into the house during the night, and that something dreadful had happened.

Miss Smith had heard them, and called out. Pentworth, the husband, had gone to Miss Smith's aid. She herself so terrified that she durst not move. She heard a groan, and lay paralysed with terror till it was light, and had then crept down by the back staircase and brought the news. What had really taken place she did not know.

Two officers went back with her. They found Pentworth on the stairs, unconscious from a great wound in his head, and Miss Smith outside her bedroom door stone dead.

Pentworth was taken to the infirmary at once, and the hue and cry was raised. Windsor telephoned to us. Two of us went. We came to the conclusion that it was a London job. It appears that Miss Smith kept a large sum of money in the house, and there was valuable plate besides, and with all this the thieves had made off. We found a jemmy, but with no distinct marks that would give us a clue. Pentworth rallied a little, but was unable to give any very decided account of the affair.

There were two men, but his description of them was so vague as to be quite useless for the purpose of identification. Poor fellow! Inflammation of the brain set in, and more than a twelvemonth elapsed before he was well again.

We worked hard to secure the murderers. We made every inquiry at Windsor and at the railway stations. We closely watched all the known thieves in town, and arrested on suspicion those whom we thought likely. But it was useless. For several weeks we exerted our-

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selves to the utmost, but it became one of those crimes that seemed fated to be a secret. Of course, the papers, who are wiser than we, were very severe with us on account of our failure. We had come to the conclusion that it was one of a series of robberies that had taken place within a radius of thirty miles from London, which had all of them completely baffled us.

II.

ONE evening, about a month after the murder, being off duty, my wife asked me to take a message to her brother a Strand tobacconist's assistant. My wife used to tell me I was the handsomest man in the force, and she delighted in making me look as smart as possible. As I was going out she plucked a carnation and stuck it in my buttonhole, laughingly declared I looked "just lovely." Little did we guess that that single flower would bring fortune to one and death to another.

I found my brother-in-law was not there, being out on business, but was expected back by the train due at Charing Cross at 7.15, and so I strolled up to the station to meet him. A train had just arrived, and I sauntered up and down the platform watching the arrivals.

Everybody had cleared away from the platform, when a veiled lady came hurrying by. She looked at me, and, I observed, took particular notice of the flower in my coat. She made as if to pass me, but turned round.

"Good evening, Mr. Scott," she said in an inquiring tone.

I do not know what spirit of mischief prompted me, but I answered: "Good evening."

"I should have known you by the description I've had of you, sir, as well as by your flower; but I thought you would speak first."

What did the woman mean? A detective is always suspicious: a young detective eager to achieve fame, more than suspicious. There was something about the woman I didn't like, and I determined to let her talk on, little dreaming what was to follow.

I noticed that the tone of her voice did not correspond with her dress. She was dressed richly, if not exactly elegant; but her speech showed that she was a person of little education.

"Although you have never seen me before, sir, you may put full confidence in me. I'm Bill's wife, you know, and one of you now. You know, sir, how things turned out?"

"Yes, but let me have the particulars again," I said adroitly.

"Well, Bill and Alec are in a blue funk; I never thought Bill would be so nervous as he is, they want to go over the water for a bit. Bill said I must tell you as they didn't mean to do for the old lady, not even hurt her" (I gave such a start that if the woman had been observing me she must have guessed there was something wrong), "but she screamed, and that old fool, her man, came, and it was a near squeak, I can tell you, sir. Bill 'll take his Bible oath he didn't hit hard, and that he had only stunned her, but Alec says the same about the man. They got away with the swag, and a nice sum it is"—in a whisper—"close upon £2,000.

"We've bin in a funk ever since. 'Tecs have been about everywhere, but they never suspected us. But it makes us feel nervous to see them about. Bill and Alec want to get off this week, and they want you to manage it for them."

"What do they wish me to do?" I asked.

"Well, Bill's plans are this. He thinks the best way would be to escape dressed as sailors. He says would you send or bring two suits of sailor's clothes, and give them to me here. Then Bill wants you to bring your yacht round into the Thames, and fix a night for Bill and Alec to come. They ll pretend to be slightly elevated if anyone is about, and you must be looking out for 'em and blow 'em up for not being on board before. Bill's sure they can get through all right that way."

"And supposing I refuse?" I asked rather foolishly.

She looked at me in surprise.

"Refuse, sir! Oh, I know, sir, you won't refuse. I said to Bill: 'Suppose Mr. Scott says no, how then?' Bill only laughs and says: 'It'll be all right for he hasn't forgot the Seward business!'"

I had great difficulty in again repressing my emotion. Was I about to solve the Seward business, too?

"Yes, very well; and now you'd better go. Have a hansom?"

"Yes, thank you, sir," and she was soon out of the station.

I was so excited that I scarcely knew what I was doing as I paced up and down the platforms, thinking over what I had just heard, till another incident called me to myself.

Another train had just come in that was evidently late. One of the passengers, about my size and looks, and with a flower like mine in his coat, lingered on the platform, looking keenly about. I saw it all. The train late and my carnation had revealed the Smith murderers to me. I took the flower out of my coat, and then called a smart-looking porter.

"Look here," I said, "do you know me?"

"No," he said.

"Well, I come from Scotland Yard, and I've a job on, and I want you to do a little for me. It's not much, and if you do it well, here's a sovereign for you."

"Yes, I'll do it," he said, his eyes glistening.

"There's a gentleman up on the platform yonder, with a red carnation in his coat, looking about for someone. I want you to go up to him and say: 'A young lady was here, sir, and she said would I tell a gentleman with a carnation in his buttonhole that all was right; that she had gone back, and that it would be better not to trouble you.' Can you remember?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"And, if you can, find out whether he's going back, and where to."

He started off, and I stood where I could see them without being seen.

Presently the porter came back.

"He looked mighty pleased, sir, and then said: 'How soon is there a train to Westsea?' 'In ten minutes, sir,' I said; 'further platform,' and off he's gone."

"Thank you, you've done well. Not a word about this, now." and I gave him the sovereign.

I ran to the office, booked, and then went towards the Westsea train. I found my gentleman in a first-class carriage. I got into a second. I looked out at every station to be sure that "Westsea" was not a blind. But no; he got out at Westsea, and I followed.

"Hansom!" I heard him call, and one came up. He was evidently well-known, for the driver did not need any directions. I walked up to the next in the rank.

"A cab, sir?"

"No," I said; "but here's a shilling if you'll tell me if that isn't Lord Hayleet who just took the hansom."

"Oh, no, sir, that is Mr. Scott, of Westman House."

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"What is he?"

"Oh, a hindependent gentleman, sir. Made his pile in the North, and come to live down here. He is a nice and open-handed gentleman is Mr. Scott. He's in the Town Council and a magistrate, and it strikes me he'd been in Parliament if Westsea had only a say in the matter. His yacht, the *Cleopatra*, is in the bay now."

"Thank you," I said, as I tipped him a shilling, and, well content, I went back to town.

III.

I told my superior that I had a clue to the Smith murderers if they would give me a free hand.

"Certainly," said my chief, "and I hope you'll succeed. Promotion is sure if you do."

At nine o'clock that evening I met Bill's wife again. I handed her a portmanteau containing two sailor suits, and gave her explicit directions.

"You will tell them to come down to Sefton Wharf, and I'll be there myself and some of the crew, or," recollecting myself, "I will send my captain."

"Thank you, sir, very much. Bill will bring a thousand for you, and he says that they will be able to do a bit of work in Paris, for Bill can parlez-vous pretty well."

"Now, listen. Tell them to say 'Houp la!' when they get to the wharf and see a boat, and I will answer with the same. Now just go over what I have told you."

Straight away she recounted my instructions, and with a cordial "Good night" she left me.

I had a busy time the next day. I applied for and was granted as many men as I wanted. I sent one, on whom I placed most reliance, down to Westsea to watch Scott, while I arranged the capture of Bill and Alec.

My heart beat wildly as, with four policeman disguised as sailors, we rowed up to the rendezvous. I instructed my men that directly the two came in the boat they were to shove off, as it was hardly likely that they would find out the description in the dark, and when I said "Now" they were to get up and handcuff the pair.

We lay for some time so perfectly still that we could almost hear our hearts beat, for my men were suffering from supressed emotion as much as I myself. Presently two figures came slowly through the gloom and stood above us.

"Houp-la!" said one, just loud enough to be heard.

I responded with the same word, and rowed the boat close in. They came down, whilst I on the steps held in the boat. They peered at me doubtfully, but I said:

"It's all right; Mr. Scott couldn't come himself, so he sent me. I'm his sailing master. Jump in quick; he said we must waste no time."

Full of confidence, they obeyed, and sat beside me. We went out about thirty yards, when I said to one I took for Bill:

"Just go and sit in the bow; we're too many."

I could see the man quivering as Bill rose and began to walk carefully towards the bow.

He was just in the middle of the boat when I cried out: "Now," and turned on a dark lantern I had.

Instantly two policemen fell on each passenger, and in a moment they were handcuffed.

"Two of you row back, and you, Jones and Thomas, keep guard."

I will not waste words in describing the stupefaction of the twain.

"Be sure they've no weapons," I said, "before we land."

They were at once searched, and found they each had a revolver. We took them up the steps, hailed the two cabs we had in waiting, and took them to the station.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Bill, who was in the same cab as myself, when at last he found his tongue.

"Oh! only this," I said sweetly, "the next time you send your wife to meet somebody, you ought to make sure she will speak to the right person."

"Great Scott!" he groaned, "she's given us away," and, coward-like, he sobbed aloud.

When we got them to the station, we found that they were men we had never known before

When the charges were read over to them, Alec said: "Lord have mercy on us! It's the rope, Bill."

As I had foreseen, we got some very valuable information. There was a gang of five, with Scott as their leader.

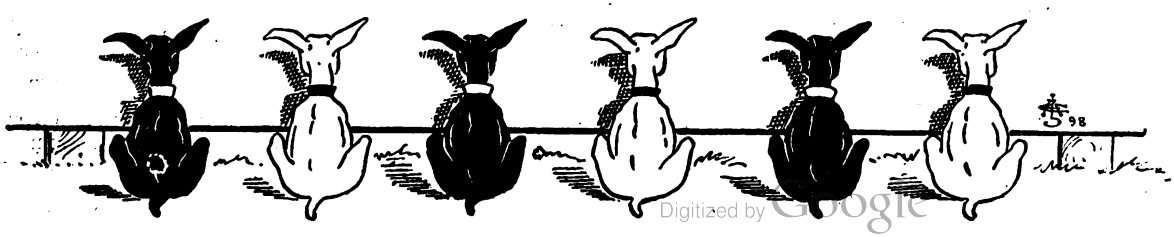
From what they said, he was an extremely daring man. He lived in grand style at Westsea, as I already knew. He seldom committed a robbery himself, but his was the master mind that arranged all. He moved in good society, and that aided him in his crimes, and many of his friends and acquaintances who had been robbed little thought that their charming guest was the head and front of the thief.

Next morning two of us went down to Westsea. We were very fortunate. He was on the station platform looking at the bookstall when he found each arm seized, and I said, "Edward Scott, I arrest you."

Our extreme caution was justified, for he fought like a wild beast, and we had to call assistance before we secured him.

The case created quite a sensation, and for a short time my praises were sung loudly. We also managed after a week to secure the remaining members of the gang. Bill and Alec escaped the rope for what I consider a worse fate—a life sentence.

But Scott did not escape. The Smith murder (I have no time to give you particulars) was brought home to him, and one wild March morning a flag that hung above a prison wall told that one villain in the world had paid the penalty of his crimes. F. W. Harral.



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MIXED SENTIMENT.

I AND Slater were sharing diggings up Bloomsbury way, and looking back on the partnership now I am bound to believe that Slater got the best of it. He was easy-going and lazy to the last degree, impulsive and good-natured enough but totally unreliable and never out of a scrape for two consecutive weeks as long as I was with him.

At times the companionship of such a man was trying, and many a time and often I threatened to dissolve it summarily when Slater's reckless idiocy had plunged me into some predicament of a more than ordinary embarrassing nature; but somehow I never did.

For many reasons the arrangement was a convenient one, and Slater's easy-going nature was a wholesome tonic at times to one like myself who was apt to take the world's disappointments over-seriously. The breezy flippancy with which he could throw a rejected MS behind the stove and settle down to play nap while a host of greedy creditors hung about and threatened us with county courts and brokers' men was strengthening; and to hear him revile the finances when they were so diminutive that it seemed scarcely worth while was stimulating to a man who had the misfortune to possess a morbid dread of falling behind the just and lawful claims that he had contracted.

And beyond all these things there was "copy" in Slater's individuality. The wildest and most improbable ideas crossed his mind and were put into operation quite regardless of the result, though to do Slater even-handed justice the results were generally for others, he being content to preserve the joke alone for himself. In all save one instance did he do so, that is, and that was the affair of his nine and twentieth engagement, which I am going to tell you about.

Slater had been out all day, and as I was sporting the oak I hoped that he would remain out at any rate until I had got my manuscript completed and out of the way. But he didn't! He came in with a rush, in his accustomed fashion, throwing his hat to one side of the room, preparatory to squatting on the still wet sheets which I had been working over, and lighting his pipe.

"I'm in a bit of a mess, old chap, and I want you to help me out," he commenced, ignoring my glare of dissatisfaction and resentment.

"Oh," said I coldly. "What is it this time—forgery or a tailor's bill?"

"Don't try to be funny," he retorted. "It's too dismal. The fact is, it is that girl that I met at Sludgecomb, in the summer. You see, mooning about the beach together we got rather chummy and I somehow felt that I couldn't manage to live without her, so just after I returned to town I wrote and told her so."

"Good," said I chuckling. "I suppose you made your substantial and independent position quite clear at the same time. It must require an abnormal amount of impudence to invite a girl to come and take a share of an income which doesn't exist."

"I get more than you do anyhow," said Slater sourly. "I've made seventeen and a tanner this week from the *Gospel Greeting*. But we didn't get as far as that."

"No!" said I inquiringly. "Oh she doesn't reciprocate, I see, sensible girl! Never mind; let not sorrow dim your eye. Go for another."

"That's the confounded mischief of the thing; I have," said Slater dismally. "I met Minnie at the Museum this afternoon, and asked her the same thing in the interval of waiting. I thought the other one would be bound to refuse as it is nearly a fortnight since I wrote."

"And she did refuse," I suggested; "well that ought to straighten it out for you."

"Confound it, how dense you are," he grumbled. "She didn't refuse; they both reciprocate, and here am I set down for bigamy and not the ghost of a show of getting out of it that I can see. And the worst of it is, Loo—that's the Sludgecomb girl—has come up to London to stay with her married sister. Confound it! There ought to be a statute of limitations to apply to these affairs."

"There is," said I chuckling again as the humour of the situation struck me. "It's usually applied to the man though, and it limits him to one. The way out is limited too, and a bit unpleasant at that. Let's see," I continued checking them off slowly on my fingers. "There is bigamy one, suicide two, breach of promise three."

"You are a Job's comforter, upon my word. Is that a sample of your humour?" he grumbled rudely. "I don't wonder that it falls flat if it is."

"Sorry," said I, putting on a pipe. "Well, suppose you go over the thing again, summarise it so to speak, and then I'll tell you candidly what I should do, sup-

posing for the sake of argument that I ever could be such an ass—such an unprincip'ed ass"—I repeated, (emphas'sing the "unprincipled." and rubbing it in, for I was a bit nettled at the imputation on my professional skill) "as to get myself in such a hole."

"Well," commenced Slater, bolting down a retort that wouldn't have tended to turn away wrath, "there's Minnie—you know, that nice little girl who has a studio in Bloomsbury and does stuff for the *Pictures*. I like her the better of the two, though Loo is a jolly nice girl, and if she had only been a bit more prompt——"

Slater broke off and sighed dismally.

"Minnie—one," said I.

"Yes, and now the other one has accepted me in six sheets explaining that she had been unable before this to decide on such an important matter. Confound it, there ought to be some statute of limitations in these affairs."

"Clearly," said I. "But you made that remark before."

"And she's coming up to London to-morrow to her married sister," continued Slater feverishly twisting up some of my manuscript to light his pipe with.

"Well you had best see her and try to come to some arrangement," I suggested.

"But I can't," he wailed. "Minnie will be bound to hear of it if I do. Can't you see her for me and get her to go home again. You might tell her I am a bad lot, and advise her to have nothing to do with me, or say that I've been killed in a railway accident and couldn't come."

"Thanks," said I, "but I'm a bit engaged myself. Besides, it is rather an awkward sort of commission, and one that I don't care much about undertaking, to be perfectly frank."

"Well, you could pretend that you are me," he urged. "Say that you've had typhoid or something which accounts for your altered appearance. When she sees what an ugly-looking beggar you are likely she'll be only too glad to drop off on her own account."

The conceited little ass! I felt a strong temptation to kick him; but I dissembled and dwelt instead on the sweet innocence of my nature, which would never permit me successfully to deceive a confiding maiden in such a heartless way, to say nothing of the probable disapproval the lady with whom I hoped to have all things in common, save perhaps my pipe and boots and umbrella, when things brightened, might manifest.

"Oh, that won't matter," persisted Slater selfishly, "And, besides, you won't be you for the time being—you'll be me."

"Heaven forbid!" I ejaculated. I was thinking of Slater's exceedingly weak intellect, and his head, which suggested a badly constructed turnip of abnormal size; but when he fiercely demanded what I meant by that, I spared his feelings and intimated somewhat coldly instead that I was in no mood to take on the burden of a double engagement. "Besides," I explained, "however willing I might be to oblige you, I should be certain to make a mess of it. Diplomacy in such a delicate matter will be required of an order that it would only be conceited folly for me to pretend to."

Protest as I would, however, Slater was insistent, and at last he went so far as to say that I should "jolly well have to," and that it was absurd for a man to stand out about such a trifle.

That set my back up, and I told him pretty shortly that I would see him somewhere warmish before I would do anything of the sort.

"Ask Rogers to," said I. "It's more in his line than mine, and he'd enjoy a job of that sort."

"Well, you fat-headed cuckoo, why couldn't you suggest that to me before? It's the very thing," was Slater's retort. Off he went to concoct some rotten scheme with the worthy I had named, and I saw nothing more of him that night.

Rogers, I may as well mention, was one of our clan, the biggest, noisiest, and most erratic of a big, noisy and erratic brotherhood. He is a black and white man ostensibly, though to us he seemed to pick up a very fair living by doing nothing except smoke and irritate us in turns by crude and inconsiderate joking of the practical order. And it was to this man that Slater went with the very delicate commission that I had refused to undertake.

Slater knows a man in the theatrical line, and when, after a visit to him, the worthy couple turned up at my place to put their plan in operation, I myself was puzzled for the moment to discriminate between them, so marvellously had the one been copied in the other. Rogers is a heavier man than Slater, and that, to one who knew them both as well as I did, was likely to give their game away; but it was a remote contingency and I got thoughtful when I remembered the alibi by which Slater cleared himself the last time he was invited out to explain a slightly erratic course of behaviour which an unpoetical policeman realistically termed "d & d."

The precious couple were very lively over the deception they were contemplating, and I felt it incumbent on me to remonstrate with them. But Rogers had somehow contrived to picture Slater in the light of a well-meaning but weak-minded ass who had fallen prey to the machinations of some designing female, and he was inclined to regard his interference as rather meritorious than otherwise; and Slater—selfish as per usual—and seeing only the opportunity of getting out of an exceedingly tight quarter which he put to the credit of malignant chance alone, and not in any way to his own foolish conduct, told me with witty brevity to "shut up" and attend to my ink-slinging concerns. And then after lighting his pipe and giving Rogers a few parting instructions he went off and left us together.

Rogers wanted to have a few details concerning the affair he had recklessly engaged upon from an unprejudiced source; but of course I could tell him nothing except that he was a first-class ass to have consented to mix up in it. That much I did tell him, rubbing it in on every occasion, and to get square with me for it. Rogers sat about until late in the day and made himself a nuisance.

After that I suppose it got slow. The girl didn't call as they expected, and Rogers ambled about the room until I got into such a state of savage exasperation that I seriously contemplated shying my ink-pot at him. Then he said he should take the bull by the horns and go and call on her. He wasn't going to be made a fool of, any way, he said, and as he had gone to all the trouble of dressing up for the part he was hanged if he would drop it without at least catching sight of the fair enslaver who had run Slater into an actual proposal. It was a rattling good idea—for me, and I encouraged him to put it into shape straight off.

He thanked me for nothing and went, taking my tobacco along with him and leaving me smokeless. However, it was a cheap quittance, and I settled down to my work with a distinct sense of relief in the hope and expectation of then being able to accomplish something. But I didn't.

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An hour or so later Slater came in.

"Hello," said he, "where's Rogers? Has Miss Blake been?"

"No," said I, chuckling; "Rogers didn't like to be disappointed and so he's gone to call on her."

"There's a meddling, fat-headed fool for you," was the grateful response. "A clumsy ass like that is bound to make a mess of it. He'll disgust the girl before he's seen her ten minutes."

"Well, considering that owing to the superior attractions of 'Minnie' you have specially engaged Rogers to impersonate you in the most rowdy objectionable manner that he can contrive and for that very purpose, I shouldn't be surprised if he does," said I. "Rogers is copying you and he is a very realistic actor, you know. But what is the objection?"

"There isn't any superior attraction," retorted Slater surlily. "That other girl is off—she hadn't really accepted me, you know," he explained diffidently; "but her manner was affectionate and I was too jolly afraid of hurting her feelings to break off with her. But it seems that she's got that tow-headed ass Jenkins on the string—engaged to him for months, she told me as cool as a cucumber."

"Good,' said I, chuckling again. "Anyway, you'll have to stand by Rogers."

"I will—with a stick, if he goes and spoils my chance with Loo," retorted Slater grimly. "Hello, what's that? Great Scott!"

Slater's ejaculation was cut short by the appearance of a couple of ladies, who entered the room at this juncture, followed by the beaming Rogers. One, very young and very pretty, I judged to be the object of Slater's negative regard, and the elder was of course the married sister.

The affair was beginning to get interesting, and I chuckled inwardly as I rose to acknowledge the introduction. Rogers did it very well and with consummate cheek, and I had all my work cut out not to laugh aloud when he turned from me with a beaming grin and a "Hello, Rogers, old man, pleased to see you! Allow me to introduce," etc.

Slater squirmed and acknowledged the bow of the ladies with a stiff and somewhat stilted grace.

"Rogers is a very old friend of mine, you know," explained the joker. "He is supposed to be rather like me too, though I could never detect it myself." Mrs. Todney thought there was some slight resemblance; but Miss Blake said she should never have noticed it, in a tone that must have been a bit trying to Slater to hear. It seemed to me to emphasize some underlined note of scorn at the bare idea of comparing such a commonplace individual with her Tom.

Slater—the real Slater—got a bit higher on his stilts and was coldly courteous, while the genial humbug who was personating him remarked affably that we were going to have a cup of tea together.

"It's a bit cramped, old chap," he observed. "Bachelor's digs, you know; but if you like to stay we shall be pleased."

Slater went out and mooched around the streets with his pipe on and rage in his heart, while Rogers and I indulged in a very cosy little tea-party in which two at least of the party enjoyed themselves to the utmost.

I was interested in noting Roger's idea of choking the girl off. I don't rightly understand these matters; but it didn't seem to me to correspond at all with the rules for that purpose that Slater had laid down earlier in the day.

Rogers is a gentleman on occasions, and that was one of them. Added to this he was a devoted and enthusiastic lover, and I watched the game stealthily and wondered what the *dénouement* was to be.

Rogers took his *fiancée* to the Strand, where some exceptionally fine piece was running that evening. He asked me to accompany them; but I was busy and had to decline the invitation. Instead I stayed at home and had a private and picturesque display of profanity from Slater, who came in in a huff and seemed to have something on his mind and temper.

He was beautifully inconsistent, and he raged away about Rogers in a perfectly idiotic manner until I ventured to remind him that our mutual friend was really only obliging him in the matter, when all was said and done.

"Um, he seemed to find it pretty congenial," growled Slater. "I didn't want him to make love to the girl in that indecent fashion either. He was to choke her off, not trot her in to tea and off to theatres, leaving me to cool my heels out in the cold."

"You were invited and wouldn't come," said I sternly. "Besides, you see, he has got your reputation to maintain. You have such a way with you with girls, and if he hadn't lived up to it Miss Blake would have seen through the trick at once, and that would have been awkward."

"Do you think that is it?" queried Slater, catching at the suggestion in a pathetically silly manner.

"Certainly," said I chuckling. "It is to be hoped that he won't go and fall in love with her on his own account though. She is a wonderfully pretty girl and she has some cash too, I believe."

"Eh," shouted Slater.

"Cash," said I. "I gathered from her sister that the old man is senior partner in Blake and Boney, you know, the big shipping people."

Slater looked troubled and went off to bed early with his pipe, leaving me to my own devices and to catch up in the arrears of my work that the events of his silly scheming had entailed.

I ran against Rogers accidentally the next day. He was "doing" London in company with the young lady, who was under the impression that she was engaged to him, and I seized a favourable chance of giving him an idea of the altered position of affairs.

"That other girl is off, old man," I concluded, "and Slater seems to think that Loo can be on again. It's a rotten affair altogether and no business of mine; but, if you have any feeling in the matter I should advise you to keep away a bit and make it straight with the girl as soon as you can."

Rogers grinned, and after a little general conversation we parted.

"I say, old chap, I'm engaged," said Slater a week or two later.

"It sounds like a familiar complaint," I retorted. "Have you put things straight with Miss Blake then?"

"She—no, I had forgotten all about her," said Slater in lofty disdain. "By the way, what has become of Rogers?"

"Oh, he's engaged, too, I believe," said I dryly. "One fool makes many you know."

I suppose it was a case of "A rose by any other name."

Any way, it was Rogers' eldest hopeful that shied a brick through my kitchen window last week, and the old gentleman who reproved him answered to the name of "grandad" and was once the senior partner in the firm of Blake and Boney Ltd.

R. ANDOM.

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A COUPON WORTH £1,000.

If the Figures you write on this Coupon should be the only correct forecast made, it will bring you in £1,000. In the last Competition two coupons similar to this brought in £500 each to two lucky individuals.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in England and Wales for the week ending July 1st, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk from whom you obtained this copy of "S.S." to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Newsagents and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£100**, and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £100 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, and the £5 for bookstall boys.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in England and Wales for the corresponding period during the past three years.

The figures published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending July 4th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending July 3rd, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending July 2nd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,372	3,691	7,115	3,106	6,575	3,203

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

This Competition closes on Wednesday, June 28th.

S. S.

My estimate is - { Births ..... / Deaths ..... } Write in large Figures.

Name .....

Address .....

Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk* .....

.....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," AND "PASTIMES."

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100,000 PRIZES.

A PRIZE FOR EVERY COMPETITOR.

1	Prize of	ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.
1	„	FIFTY POUNDS.
1	„	TWENTY POUNDS.
5,000	Prizes of	Handsome Watches.
5,000	„	Ladies' Companions.
5,000	„	Sporting Knives.
5,000	„	Hair Brushes.
5,000	„	Hand Mirrors.
5,000	„	Silver Brooches.
5,000	„	Gold-Plated Pencil-cases.
5,000	„	Silver Bangles.
5,000	„	Penknives.
5,000	„	Pen and Pencil Boxes (3 deckers.)
10,000	„	Paint Boxes.
10,000	„	Boxes of Dominoes.
10,000	„	Pearl and Porcupine Penholders.
10,000	„	Compasses.
10,000	„	Boxes of Crayons.
20	Prizes of	ONE POUND each.
20	„	TEN SHILLINGS each.

From now until November 25th a coupon will appear on the front page of cover of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES, SHORT STORIES, and PASTIMES. To the person who collects the greatest number of these coupons and sends them to us on a date we shall specify later, we will give the sum of One Hundred Pounds; to the collector of the second greatest number we will give Fifty Pounds, and so on until the whole 100,043 prizes have been awarded.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

This is the only competition that has ever been devised in which every competitor will get a prize.

All the articles enumerated above are of the best make and well worth possessing, therefore no prize will be given to any person who sends fewer than 200 coupons.

The prizes altogether will cost us about £10,000.

Ask any friend of yours who reads our papers to give you his coupons.

The Competition will run for twenty-nine weeks. If the members of your family take in "P.W.," "H.N.," "S.S.," and "Pastimes," and you collect the coupons from each, this will give you 114 coupons. You can easily obtain from your friends the balance to make up the 200, in which case you will be certain of getting a prize.

A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss fire. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same, your 200 coupons would win you £100.

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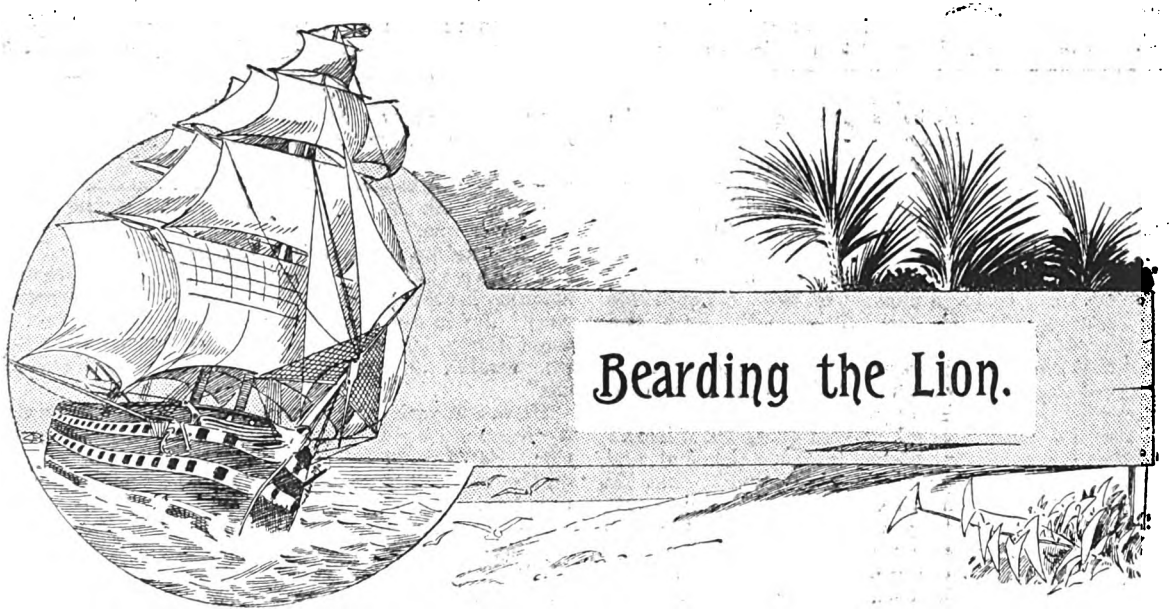

Bearding the Lion.

My word! what a hot day it was (said Westwood)—sweltering hot! I was sitting, I remember, by the side of the lake, trying to make up my mind whether I wouldn't bathe in spite of the alligators; and that infernal sheet of water, with its blue surface, and the air over it shaking in the sun, reminded me of rolled iron, just when the red heat's out of it, and the blue look comes on to it, so that you might think it's cool until you saw the heat quiver up.

I had a poor beast of a dog with me, and tried to make him go in and try the alligators first, and it was comical to see him; he'd just touch the water first with one paw, and then start back and watch intently, with his ears cocked and his head on one side; then he'd try the other paw, then his mouth; and, thirsty as he was, when he felt the water touch his tongue, he'd start back wilder than ever, shaking his head, and rubbing his paws over it as if the water really were the hot iron it made one think of.

"The alligators are on the look-out," says I to myself. "I can't cool myself that way." So I sat still, in that frizzling heat, and said hard things at the water, and the earth, and the sky.

You don't know what a bad temper really is until you're being tried by heat of that kind. Suddenly I heard what seemed the sound of a horse galloping.

"By Jove!" thinks I to myself, "that gentleman must be in a precious hurry to kill his horse, and try for a sunstroke for himself. I wonder what *he's* flying from?"

But I hadn't time to wonder long, for in a moment I saw a man galloping up from Tom Crewe's direction—Tom Crewe was a kind of foreman of Jim Blake's—as hard as he could towards my house, and in almost as quick as it takes to tell you he'd reined up, close in front of me.

"Westwood!" he said in a strangled gasp, "you must help me! I've killed a man!"

I stood still where I was, and looked at him.

"I tell you you must help me!" he repeated, shaking in his saddle. "Don't stand staring at me like that! This is how it was," he said cringingly, "and you'll see it wasn't my fault, and that you're bound to give me a hand.

"You know Tom Crewe? Well, I was down at his place, because I had a little business on with him; and it's very hot to day, so we thought we'd have a drink And he got out his keg of whisky, and we took a drain, and then he told me to start my yarn, which I did. What came over him I don't know; but there was an axe lying handy, and all of a sudden he takes this up in his hand, and walks round and round me, as I was talking, and keeps on dropping it on to me, first on my leg, then on my shoulder, then on my neck.

"I took it quiet at first, because I know what a queer customer Crewe is; but presently I couldn't stand it any longer. 'You jes' drop that tool,' I said. 'How can I talk properly when you're playing like that?' But he only laughed and went on fooling with his axe worse than ever, until it dropped on its edge on my arm. Look here!"

I noticed then for the first time that the left arm of his coat was soaked in blood, and that there was a lot of clotted blood, too, on his left hand. It had trickled down there and dried.

"That was too much for me," he said—and it was a horrible thing the way his voice came out through his throat, all dried with whisky, and heat, and fear—"and I jumped up, and faced Crewe, and told him to drop that, or it'd be the worse for him. 'You mean fool,' he says to me, 'you sit down again, and git along with your business or it'll be the worse for *you!*' Well, I don't know how it all happened after that; but I'd gone at him, and he'd dropped his axe, and I'd picked it up while he'd put his hand behind him.

"But I knew what was coming next, and before he'd time to get his revolver out I'd brought down the axe over his head and killed him.

"Good Heavens!" he ended, in a kind of hoarse scream, "what an awful sight he was!

"And you'll help me, Westwood—now, won't you? You see it wasn't my fault."

What was exactly up with me, I can't tell you. I think the heat head got fairly into my head; and it

seemed to me that it was a kind of consciousness of those two drinking and trying to murder each other that had nearly brought the panic on me just before; anyhow, I felt a longing to go straight for Marshall and kill him right away, as he sat there quivering in the burning sunlight before me.

But I kept my hands in, and, instead, I fell into a rage; I confounded him and Crewe, for a couple of mad blackguards, to be drinking neat spirit at that time of the day, in that blinding heat: and I told Marshall that I didn't believe a word of his pack of lies, and to go, for I wouldn't move a finger to help him.

He sat steadier for a moment or two. "You'll help me, Westwood," he said, "or I'll go on the bush, and you'll rue it!"

But that only made me worse. "Go on the bush, and be hanged to you!" I shouted. "The bush is the only fit place for the whole lot of you."

Before I'd finished speaking he'd gone, and if hadn't been that I saw the cloud of dust his horse kicked up, and heard him galloping away, I'd have thought that I'd had a touch of delirium as I stood there in the doorway.

Well, I went on to my grove; but what with the heat and the fury I'd been in with Marshall, and the story he'd told me, and the idea of the dead man away down there, lying baking in the sun, I couldn't do a stroke of work for the life of me, and I felt that I *must* go down to Crewe's and lay him in his house decently.

I hadn't gone far before I met a nigger running away as fast as he could go, and when he go near I saw that he had that queer grin on his face, and that kind of smoky ash colour which show that niggers are in a deadly fright.

"Hullo, Sam!" I said. "What's wrong with you?"

"O Lor'! Mistah Wasstud, sah," he quavered, "Mistah Kroo!"

"Well," says I, with my heart seeming to roll about inside me; "and what of him?"

"Oh! Mistah Kroo, he jes' awful, sah," said the nigger. "I'se gwine to tell him breakfus' reddy, an' cum roun' de corner, when thar was Mistah Kroo, walkin' up an' down in front of de house, an' his head was cut in half, an' he was saying, 'I *won't* die!' An' he's clutchin' his gun, an' he points it to me, sah, an' say, 'Go away, you niggah! You go, or you'se dead niggah.' So I'se run up fas' to tell you, sah; and what I'se do now, sah? I'se not gwine back Mistah Kroo, for ten thousan' pounds, sah."

Then the fright took him again, and he ran off as fast as he could lay his great splay feet to the ground.

So here was I going down to pick up a dead man, and there was that very dead man walking up and down in front of his house declaring he wouldn't die, and giving snakes to niggers.

But I went on, and presently came in sight of Crewe's house. There he was, sure enough, staggering up and down in the sun, with a gun in his hand; and when I got within earshot I heard him swearing to himself, just as the nigger had said, that he *wouldn't* die. He didn't see me till I was within about twenty paces of him; he was too busy vowing he wouldn't die.

But all of a sudden he heard me, and started round, facing me. There was a great cut which came clear down from his head to his left eye. He staggered back against the wall of his hut and raised his gun, aiming it point-blank at me.

"What do you want?" he spluttered. "Come sniggering down here in the hopes you'd see Tom Crewe die! But I won't; I *won't!* And I'll have no fool hankering round to finish me. Now just you go away! You come one step nearer, and you'll find yourself where you hoped I was, and where I won't go."

"Now, look here, Tom Crewe," I said, "that's all gammon, you know! I've come down here to see whether I can't lend you a hand; I've brought you a chair, because I know you haven't got one. As to your pop-gun there, you ain't going to frighten me that way, you know. You and Jim Blake are always going round saying you'll shoot everyone."

"Yes, an' we *do* shoot 'em too, now and again," he said, with a kind of leer which, under that gaping wound, made my heart turn cold. "Now, will you clear, or won't you? If you ain't showing your back by the time I count thirty, I'd sooner be me than you, for all I got this scratch on my face from that fool, Marshall. Go."

He was fingering his trigger, and I thought to myself it was no use trying to reason with a man in that condition. So I turned and went; but I left my chair there, on the sand, so that he might get it if he felt a mind that way.

As I was sauntering back with my eyes on the ground, thinking I appeared to be pretty mean, and wondering whether I hadn't been a coward not to run in and close with Crewe, and make him take my help, I suddenly saw a shadow, and looking up, I saw Phœbe Blake passing me quickly in the direction from which I was coming. It's a queer thing how delicate and refined some of those backwood girls are, in spite of every kind of thing against them in the way of bringing up! And Phœbe Blake was one of that kind; a beautiful sweet pale face, great big dark eyes, dark wavy silky hair, and a tall slight figure in a white dress; you might have thought that you could blow her away with a breath. As I've told you before, I wasn't in much with the Blakes, and I scarcely knew Phœbe more than to say "Good morning" to, which was what I did now.

"Good morning, Mr. Westwood," says she, and passed on.

But it suddenly struck me that she might be going to see Tom Crewe, and that I'd better warn her of the danger. So I told her what had been on, and how Crewe wouldn't let anyone come near him, and that she'd better turn back home again. She gave me such a look that I tell you it's me you might have blown away with a breath instead of her.

"And do you mean to tell me," she said, in a voice which cut me like a knife, "that you've left that poor, daft, wounded thing away there without any help because you were afraid? And they told me that you're the pluckiest man in all this district for the way in which you bested my brother! I wonder what the rest may be like!"

But she turned round and was walking back beside me.

"At any rate, Miss Blake," I couldn't help saying, "I'm glad that you'll not be so rash as to go on."

"I'm going back to fetch some linen and things, to dress that poor Crewe's wound," she said shortly.

Then I didn't say any more, but walked back with her, and at her gate asked permission to wait, and carry the things back for her as it was very hot.

"I'm sure you're very kind, Mr. Westwood," said she; "but really, if you're nervous, I'd much sooner go alone."

After which you'll understand that if it had been to the very gates of death that she was going to walk, I'd have walked there with her.

We scarcely passed another word on the way back to Crewe's; I walked beside her, carrying a basket of things which she'd put together, and she with her right hand in her skirt pocket. When we got near we saw that Tom Crewe hadn't touched my chair, and was leaning against the door of the hut, with his back turned to us, and his head on his hands, rocking backwards and forwards, as if in great pain. He'd set his gun against the wall, just handy. I looked at Phœbe Blake half doubtful and half curious; for I scarcely knew, really, whether I ought to let her go on and quietly risk death at the hands of Crewe, whom she'd come to help. After all, if someone was to die, it seemed to me a great way better that it should be he.

I thought, too, that when she saw the brute, and took note of his gun, and got close up to the danger, she'd probably tail off a bit, and stop to think. Not she! She'd just the sign of a frown between her eyes, and her pretty lips were set a little tight together, and she might have been a shade paler; but she was looking straight ahead, and walked on as calmly as if she'd been going up into a shop to ask the price of a hat.

We got closer and closer, and still Crewe didn't change his position; when, just as we might have been about twenty yards away, almost as we had passed my chair, he heard us, and twisted himself round with his hand on his gun.

"You again!" he choked out at me, with an oath. "Well, take what you've come for, then!"

He was raising his gun to his shoulder, and I couldn't help checking my pace, when I saw Phœbe Blake, instead of stopping, start running forward, whisking her hand out of her pocket.

"Up with your hands, Tom Crewe!" she called out.

No man of Crewe's experience will answer "No" to that order when he's not first. Down clattered his gun; up went his hands; and there was Phœbe Blake standing up to him, not eight paces off, covering him point blank with a revolver.

"Mr. Westwood," said she, keeping her eye well fixed upon him, "would you please come and pick up that gun?" I did so.

"Now, Tom Crewe," she says, "you'll just walk into our house, and keep quiet, and let me dress your head."

In he staggered, quiet as a lamb, and Phœbe followed him in.

I heard him say, "Oh, my head! my head! Oh, my head! But I *won't* die!" and she said, "Oh, poor thing! poor thing!" and then she called out to me to come in and help her.

It was a heart turning piece of work; but we got through it, and put Tom on his kind of bed, and he vowed he wouldn't move; he was as grateful now, poor devil, as a dog, when we'd dressed a wound for him.

Then Phœbe came outside the house, and, to my surprise, started crying as if her heart would break.

I stood there like a fool—every man is a fool, when a woman cries—not knowing what to say; until at last I jerked out something about her courage.

Presently she dried her eyes, and looked up at me, and never to my dying day shall I forget what a sweet, touching sight she was.

"Don't talk to me of courage, Mr. Westwood," said she. "I was in mortal terror. I hadn't any right to let you come with me! He'd have done nothing to me, and he'd sworn before to kill you if you came nearer. But I *daren't* go alone after what you told me, and I beg your pardon for what I said when you met me—I do, indeed. What they all say of you is quite true, you are indeed brave."

I felt a bigger fool than ever; but I said I was ashamed of myself, and that I wished I had her spirit, and that, as for her handiness with a revolver——There she put out her little hand to interrupt me.

"Revolver!" she said, with a bit of a laugh, but her face was still half-turned to cry. "That's the worst of all! I can't stand fire-arms—I'm in deadly fear of them. Jim gave me that little revolver, in case, he said, it might ever come in useful. *And it's never been loaded!*"

"But, bless me!" said I, "then . . . and when you stood facing Tom Crewe . . . and . . . do you mean to tell me . . . not . . . but you had your hand in your pocket while you walked even!"

"I can't help it!" she said, always half-laughing and half-crying: "I *hate* the things. And I was nervous at carrying it in my pocket, although I *knew* it wasn't loaded!"

* * * * *

"That's enough for you to-day," said Westwood abruptly, after a short pause, with a slight break in his voice; "but I thought it'd interest you to hear about the first time I had any real speech of Phœbe Blake. You'll like to know that Crewe recovered; any other man'd have died; but he vowed he wouldn't—it was a wonderful thing to see that man fight with death—and he kept his word. He's horribly disfigured, but he's about still."

"And Marshall?" I asked.

"He never came back," said Westwood. "And it was well he didn't."

V. E. Ravin.

Bishop Horne had his dignity considerably taken down when he arrived to take possession of the episcopal palace at Norwich, in 1791. Being amazed at the number of spectators on the occasion, he turned round upon the steps, and exclaimed:

"Bless us! bless us! what a concourse of people."

"Oh, my lord," said a bystander, "this is a mere nothing to the crowd last Friday to see a man hanged."

Man's Inanition, Woman's Intuition.

The shortest love letters on record are said to be the following:

"Dear Clara,—

"?

"Tom."

"Dear Tom,—

"I will.

"Clara."

They were engaged to be married, and called each other by their first names, Tom and Fanny, and he was telling her how he had always liked the name of Fanny, and how it sounded like music in his ear.

"I like the name so well," he added, as a sort of clincher to the argument, "that when sister Clara asked me to name her pet terrier, I at once called it Fanny, after you, dearest."

"I don't think that was very nice," said the fair girl, edging away from him; "how would you like to have a dog named after you?"

"Why, that's nothing," said Tom, airily; "half the cats in the country are named after me."

They don't speak now.

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An Original Wooing.

The young man leant carelessly against the piano and listened to the young woman who sat on the piano stool.

"It's awfully good of you, Jack," she was saying, "and I really like you very much, because you're such a jolly fellow and never bore me; but when it comes to marrying you—why, that's a different matter. The idea is not actually displeasing to me, I will admit. Still, it isn't exactly a proposition that arouses my enthusiasm."

"Um!" said Jack.

"You see," continued the young woman, "it has always been a cardinal principle of my life to attain my ends by unusual methods—to get out of the rut, as it were—and people who are actuated by a similar motive are the people who command my admiration. Therefore I doubt if any man will succeed in screwing my affections up to the marrying point as long as he conducts his wooing in the old familiar way. See?"

"I see," said Jack.

A moment of silence ensued, during which the young man looked lingeringly upon the beauty of the young woman. He realised that he had been tenderly rejected by the only girl he ever saw who was "just his style," and he felt disposed to enter the lists and have a joust with fate—to refuse to accept her decision as final.

He also felt a strange and abnormal craving for a cigar. Rousing himself, he stood erect and addressed the young woman.

"Now, look here, Mollie," he said, "you've got to marry some time, for girls like you are not born to a life of single blessedness; but if you wait for some fellow to go after you in a new and original way, I'm afraid you'll wait several years. Originality is at a premium these days. Nevertheless, I don't propose to give up all hope myself. I have a bright idea occasionally, and by arduous effort I might even evolve a brand new style of courtship. However, I have nothing available in this line to offer just at present, so I'll say good-night."

The young woman looked up and smiled sweetly as he turned to go.

"Good-night, Jack," said she.

An hour later found Jack comfortably seated in the easiest chair his club afforded, blue smoke wreaths curling above his head and a glass at his elbow. His appearance was not, strictly speaking, such as to indicate that his heart and hand had just been respectfully declined by the girl he loved, for his was one of those buoyant natures that never fail to rise triumphant above the disappointments of life.

Still, his face wore an unusually serious expression as he lounged in the big chair and smoked his cigar, and he looked as though he was engaged in solving some abstruse problem in philosophy. As a matter of fact, he was racking his brains for a new way to "make love."

The mental pressure under which he was labouring caused the cigar and the contents of the glass to diminish with considerable rapidity. In the meantime schemes of various colours and conditions chased each other across his dome of thought only to be finally rejected as impracticable, and a dozen times he resolved to "leave off making a fool of himself." But exactly the same number of times did he return to the charge.

After every failure and every resolution he found himself spurred on to one more effort by a tantalising vision of the young woman as he left her on the piano stool, while through it all he assiduously applied epithets to her propensity for "getting out of the rut."

When the twenty-seventh scheme had been reached, progress in this interesting evolution of a method was momentarily interrupted by the advent of a fellow-clubman, who paused as he was passing the big chair and surveyed the unusually sober countenance of its occupant.

"Good evening," he observed pleasantly.

"Have you used Jugg's Beautifier?" supplemented Jack shortly. He didn't like the interruption.

"What's the matter to-night?" queried the other. "Anything wrong?"

"No," replied the young man. "This cigar is all right."

"Then," said his friend, "you must have run up against a case of love grown cold. If so, take my advice and don't despair."

"There's Fleecem's Union Underwear," murmured Jack.

The other laughed.

"My dear boy," he said, "when you read the magazines, you should confine yourself to the literary pages. The others are undoubtedly interesting and attractive, but they exercise too great an influence on your conversation. What are you thinking about that makes you look so serious?"

Jack sighed for the first time since the episode with the young woman.

"How to attain the unattainable," he answered.

"A fascinating problem, truly."

"Yes, but the solution is difficult."

"Not particularly so, providing you go about it in the right way."

"How would you do it?"

"How? Oh, I'd advertise. That's the only way results of any sort can be obtained nowadays. Well, good-bye, old man. Sorry I interrupted your cogitations."

The intruder moved away, while Jack took the cigar from his lips and gazed abstractedly at the retreating form.

Then suddenly he started and sat erect in the big chair.

"By Jove!" said he.

Jack always said, "By Jove!" when struck by a brilliant idea; therefore he considered it eminently appropriate to the present occasion. In fact, the idea that now possessed the young man, seemed so

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uncommonly brilliant that he thought it merited a repetition of the remark.

"By Jove!" he said again.

Then he flung away his cigar, and gazed earnestly at the smouldering stump for five minutes, after which he ejaculated:

"I'll do it! If she doesn't call that getting out of the rut, I'll give it up."

With one of the young man's energetic disposition to think is to act, so when he had finally decided to lure the young woman's affections in the direction of himself by means of a personally conducted advertising campaign, he lost no time in commencing operations.

He knew that such an original and up-to-date plan to woo a "high born maiden" bore the earmarks of audacity, but that very fact only lent it an added charm so far as the young man was concerned. Then, too, it was indisputably out of the ordinary, which ought to prove a favourable characteristic so far as the young woman was concerned. The scheme seemed good. Jack's spirits returned, and the world once more took a rosy aspect.

As a preliminary step in the matter, the young man hunted up his late companion for the purpose of working that individual for a little information. He didn't know much about the gentle art of advertising himself, therefore he felt the need of a few hints; and when he succeeded in finding his friend in the billiard-room watching an exciting game, he drew him on one side and propounded a leading question.

"Look here, Tom," said he, "you're a journalist and must know something about advertising. What are the essential features of a good advertisement?"

"What have you?" asked Tom. "A dyspepsia cure or a new food for infants?"

"Neither," replied Jack. "I merely have curiosity."

"In that case," said Tom, "it can be easily satisfied. Select a couple of attractive catch-lines, fill in with a few terse sentences, and, if possible, offer something free. This sort of advertisement will sell anything that's made."

"Ah! thanks," said Jack. "Close game, isn't it?"

And he returned to the big chair.

His next move was to order newspapers and writing materials. Then, having secured them, he spent an hour diligently studying the advertising columns of the papers and examining the various forms of advertisements, following which he deliberated with himself concerning the amount of space he should use in carrying out his scheme.

Considering the character of the "goods," he concluded that a delicate little space of about three inches would be the proper size, and that the best position would be on the page where the fearfully and wonderfully constructed maidens were wont to pose arrayed in the latest fashions. So far as selecting a medium was concerned he didn't have much trouble. He remembered which was Mollie's favourite weekly paper and he accordingly decided to place his business in its columns. Then he turned his attention to his first ad.

This, he found, looked easier than it really was. Good catch-lines failed to suggest themselves with any degree of promptitude, while the "something free" seemed absolutely impossible, and a large quantity of good writing-paper was immolated on the strangely united altars of love and publicity as a result of the young man's efforts. But another examination of the newspapers obviated the former difficulty, and after a long cogitation he hit on an idea that overcame the latter: whereupon he once more seized his pen with feverish haste, and finally succeeded in producing an affair that struck him as being attractive, unique, and appropriate, and possessing qualities which he thought ought to have some effect.

And the pioneer advertising campaign having for its object the wooing of a woman was at last begun.

On the following Saturday advertising circles were mildly amazed to see in the usually sedate columns of that weekly this remarkable advertisement:

MOLLIE KNOWS

all about the state of my affections, because I have already given her information concerning it. Moreover, she will doubtless be able to recall the fact that on the occasion of our last interview I intimated that I would not take "no" for an answer. In this connection I wish to mention for her benefit that, while there are many thousands of words in the English language,

ONE GIVES RELIEF,

if it is the right one. And I will also suggest that the little word "Yes" will relieve me of further anxiety, and make both her and me happy for life.

To write "Yes" and to forward it to my address, nothing more is required than a sheet of note-paper, an envelope, and a postage-stamp. I will furnish these articles free on application.—JACK.

Now, there were several hundreds of Mollies and an equal number of Jacks in the city; therefore these two names failed to furnish a clue to the identity of either the advertiser or the "people" he wanted to reach. Of course, there was much speculation indulged in and several theories were advanced; but it was generally believed that the advertisement was not to be taken seriously—that it was merely an advance ad. on the part of some enterprising manufacturer to attract public attention, and that this space would ere long be filled with the unrivalled merits of a new patent medicine, beauty promoter, or brand of complexion soap.

Jack had counted on a condition something like this following the appearance of his ad., so he was perfectly satisfied with the result so far as the general public was concerned. But he was naturally very anxious to know the particular effect produced by this unique cause, feeling sure that the young woman would be able to fathom the mystery and grasp the situation at once. There was, however, no way of satisfying himself immediately on this point, and therefore he could not yet decide whether or not wooing a girl by advertising was likely to prove a profitable enterprise.

To tell the truth, he felt rather tremulous when he considered the matter calmly, but nerved himself with the consoling thought that he was certainly getting out of the rut.

"Moreover," he reflected, "since advertising has, according to all accounts, won wealth many a time, why should it not win love once? I'll write another."

The week passed very slowly to Jack. Also, it passed without bringing a reply to his advertisement; but as he scarcely expected such quick returns, he was not greatly disappointed thereat.

When Saturday again arrived the paper was eagerly sought by that select coterie of individuals, yclept, "ad-men" who help the world to wag by "promoting trade," and therein was found, in the same position, and occupying about the same space, another curious advertisement, attractively yet delicately displayed, which read thus:

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WHEN MOLLIE SMILES

she doesn't do it in exactly the same way that several fellows of my acquaintance do their "smiling," but the effect is even more intoxicating.

In fact, so delightful is Mollie's smile that I am quite positive the

CHILDREN CRY FOR IT,

and to acquire exclusive rights in this desirable article I am ready to give in exchange a heart full of love.

The transaction may be consummated at once if she will forward to me a simple "yes," the paper, envelope, and postage stamp, for which purpose I will furnish free on application.

JACK.

By the time this second ad. appeared, the young man had lost all nervousness about the probable result of his audacity, and he even decided to make his advertising campaign more extensive and vigorous if necessary. In short, he was now fully determined to carry the affair to a definite conclusion.

He subscribed for all the journals devoted to the science of publicity that he heard of, sat up at night conning their pages for available ideas, and finally went so far as to visit an advertising "expert," who said "I" ninety-seven times in five minutes' conversation, and charged Jack two guineas for performing the feat.

The result of all he read, and all he heard was his safe arrival at the conclusion that keeping everlastingly at it would win the girl, or at least some sort of recognition from the girl, and acting on this principle, he proceeded to insert in the next Saturday's issue his third announcement.

AFTER THE WEDDING

march has been played, and I can call Mollie my own, I shall at once commence active operations, having in view her future comfort. My one object in life will then be to show her how to be happy though married, and if I can help it,

THAT WEARY FEELING

will never chase the brightness from her azure eyes, nor the roses from her cheeks. Isn't this proposition worth considering?

When ready to write "yes," remember that I will furnish the necessary articles, guaranteed first quality, *free on application*.—JACK.

The young man had now reached about the same state of mind as is enjoyed by the gambler who plays with the intention of "breaking" either the bank or himself. His habitual light and airy manner had been suspended temporarily, and his entire attention was devoted to making his advertising campaign bring forth results of some sort.

He wanted a letter from the young woman, and he wanted that letter to contain a denunciation or an acceptance.

Therefore, when three ads. had appeared without bringing him a single reply, he began to consider a way in which he could re-enforce his newspaper advertising, and with this end in view he evolved the scheme of erecting a bill-board on a vacant plot of ground opposite Mollie's home.

Accordingly he called at the office of a billposter and engaged him to make the necessary arrangements. Then he dropped a line to a well-known poster artist, requesting the latter to call at his address.

The evolution of this project and completion of arrangements for carrying it out kept Jack busy the greater part of the fourth week, its close being marked by the appearance of another newspaper advertisement.

This time the young man had redoubled his exertions in the ad.-writing line, the result being the following convincing statement:

A MAN LOVES BEST

that which he thinks of most. Consequently the time he devotes to thinking about different matters indicates in what proportion his love belongs to each one.

By close observation and accurate calculation I have discovered that I devote all but a quarter per cent. of my time to thinking of Mollie, and so my love for Mollie is

ALL THAT IS PURE:

I trust that she will give this interesting fact her attention and consideration. Beware of imitations, and do not be led into accepting "something just as good."

"Yes" is a small word and easily written. To facilitate the matter I will send a sheet of fine note-paper, with envelope to match (also a postage-stamp) *free on application*.

JACK.

On the evening of the publication of this masterpiece the young man held a conference with the poster artist behind closed doors.

"What I want," said Jack, "is a series of good designs showing a happy home in which the young wife is surrounded by every comfort and all that sort of thing. That's the main idea. The details I leave with you."

"And the wording?" queried the artist.

"There will be no wording," Jack answered.

The artist looked surprised.

"That's unusual in poster advertising," he said.

"I hope it is," replied Jack. "The—er—business I'm engaged in is rather unusual itself. Oh, yes. I also desire——"

But as to just what more the young man did desire in the poster line the artist was left in ignorance, for an interruption occurred at this moment in the shape of a loud knock and the entrance of a servant with a telegram.

Jack felt very much annoyed at the interruption. He wanted to have his new idea developed as soon as possible, and hated to delay the outlining of his plans by a single second. However, he opened the envelope and glanced at the contents.

One glance seemed to be sufficient.

He sprang to his feet, and brought his fist down upon the table with startling force.

"By Jove!" said Jack.

The artist appeared interested.

Remembering his visitor, the young man succeeded in reducing himself to a condition of comparative calmness and turned to the artist.

"I have changed my mind," he announced. "I shall not use posters."

"But——" began the artist.

"That's all," said Jack tersely.

And the artist departed without a word.

Left alone the young man hunted up a decanter. He felt a trifle faint.

Next, the excitement under which he was labouring demanded action, so he spent five minutes stalking up and down the apartment, staccato passages in the march being furnished by occasional assaults upon the unresisting table.

Then he sat down and gazed at the photograph of a girl for another five minutes, after which he re-read the telegram. It said:

JACK,—Please send at once envelope, paper, and postage stamp free on application, as advertised.—MOLLIE.

A few hours later the young man once more leaned against the piano and listened to the young woman on the piano stool, who smiled at him sweetly.

"We will help one another, and get out of the rut together, Jack," she was saying in a soft whisper.

JAMES BARRETT KIRK.

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THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Sir John Postgate.

The morrow brought ample proof that Sir John Postgate kept a sharp watch on Butley Croft, for as the shadow upon the great gilded dial marked noon up he rode, his son at his side. I was near the head of the main avenue chopping a huge, fallen elm branch into sizeable pieces for firing when the clatter of their horses' feet came behind me. I took no notice, and Sir John hailed me.

"Who are you, and what may you be doing here?" he cried.

I chopped away as stolidly as possible, and a whip-lash snapped on my hat as the son flicked lightly at me. I looked up, and oh, how uneasily my disguise sat upon me under those keen, grim old eyes.

"*Dim Saesneg*," I growled.

Both of them stared at me in good earnest now.

"Pray—" began the old man, but I interrupted him with a swift rush of a couple of my parrot sentences, and pointed to the house. The extraordinary gibberish set the younger man laughing.

"Tis a fellow from the Tower of Babel," simpered Jack Postgate.

At this moment out came Roger Thorne, eager to interpose between us.

"Whom have we here?" cried Jack Postgate, flicking his whip across me again, while my heart swelled furiously within me.

"A Welshman, Sir John," replied Roger, "A poor Taffy, with never a word of our language."

"And what brings him here?" demanded the elder man, taking no more notice of me, and riding forward to the front of the house.

I heard Roger's voice, speaking as he marched beside the horse, but I could not catch his words, and I turned again to my wood chopping, and smote the branch lustily, wishing it were John Postgate's insolent neck.

I had disliked him since we were boys, and we had fought out the battle of the day more than once with fists, while our fathers were busy with deadlier weapons.

In those encounters it had taken me all my time to gain the victory, for he was near three years older than I; but it would be another affair now, and I looked after him, and clenched my fist and longed for the chance.

He looked no Puritan figure, either, as he pranced along on his spirited nag; he was as fine as a peacock. His hat was plumed, his sword-belt was richly embroidered, and his rapier hilt was as gaily worked as any Cavalier I had ever seen. There was not so much lace perhaps as a fop on our side loves, but his clothes were bright, and, of his party, Jack was certainly a dandy of the first water.

The father was of the old school; snow-white linen, sad-coloured dress, a simple strap to carry his sword, a plain steeple hat shading a thin, severe face. The son I disliked and despised; the father I disliked, and, in my present position, feared. It is the custom with us to fix round general names upon all of the opposite party, snuffling rogues, canting hypocrites, and the like, but it is idle work, and, in the end, every man must be judged by himself.

Neither Sir John Postgate's party nor principles were to my fancy, but I could not allow him to be other than an inflexibly honest and upright man. If his duty, as he conceived it, required that I should be laid by the heels, he would so lay me, but to my disfavour he would wrest nothing. I had rather ten rogues to my enemies than one such man.

True, the rogues will dig pits for you, yet the chances are many that they themselves will fall into the pits they have digged, whereas a man of single purpose follows his aim with a constancy at once dreadful and intrepid.

After a time, I shouldered a bundle of wood and made my way to the back of the house, and entered the kitchen. It was empty, and a fancy to see what was going on in the fore-part darted into my mind. I went quickly across a

second room, and slipped up the back stairs. At the head of the first flight, a narrow passage ran to the gallery overlooking the hall, and I trod quietly along it. Voices came to my ears, and I craned my neck out from the shelter of the passage. Below stood Jack Postgate smirking and smiling, and making his finest speeches to Enid. She was listening to him with an attention which I bitterly grudged him, until I comforted myself by thinking she was polite for my sake, so unreasonable and importunate is a lover.

Then Sir John and Roger came up the hall together, and the dry old Independent paused before her, and spoke and smiled, even his grim visage unbending before her fresh young beauty. Enid smiled back, and held him in gay talk, and Jack cut in again and again, and was left unregarded, at which I took great pleasure. But I dared not stay long, lest my rambling should be discovered and awaken suspicion, so returned to the kitchen and sat down to await my dinner.

In the afternoon I was again busy hacking wood, for to labour uncomplainingly at a menial task greatly helped my disguise, when I lifted my eyes and saw my love coming towards me. She stood opposite me for a good time, and regarded me carelessly, as if idly watching my busy axe while she took the air, then sauntered closer little by little. I began to carry my logs to a pile just beyond where she stood, and we conversed as I passed and repassed.

"And your interview?"

"I think it was a success. He was extremely civil. Roger had explained to him that I had come here because of the disturbed state of our neighbourhood, and I told him of the Red Men of the Dusk."

"After all, they gave you a useful story to spin."

"He listened attentively, and then told me how things stood here, yet begged me, however, to use the house as long as I pleased."

"A gracious invitation, indeed, to a lady under her own roof."

"But how was he to know that? He spoke kindly."

"On the whole, it is just as well he shouldn't know. Did he turn any questions my way?"

"He seemed to accept the story of your escape to France. At any rate he repeated it to me in explanation of the state of affairs. It was the only reference he made to you."

"Was he curious as to your connection with Butley Croft?"

"I think he saw, though he was very guarded. Roger had told him I was a ward and connection of—of Sir Arthur Vaughan."

"It is a satisfactory account," said I, "and one to which you can fairly lay claim."

Another man now came to join me at my task, and Enid sauntered slowly away. I piled my logs and reviewed the situation carefully. It seemed strong enough, as far as I could see, for us to rest here for a time at any rate.

If any danger arose it would be easy to take the road again, for I had discovered that Roger was in a position to plentifully replenish my exhausted purse. But, to what end, to march about the country, exposing Enid to the chances of rough weather and rude travel? The very fact of her being in Butley Croft was, in a sense, an element of strength in the game we were playing.

It was a natural refuge for a connection of Sir Arthur Vaughan, a son of the house.

It argued an ignorance of our doings which would avert suspicion, yet an ignorance entirely natural, when the infrequent communication was considered.

For myself, rumour had done me an excellent turn. A party of my friends, taking alarm upon the first arrests that were made, had ridden north-east to Boston, in Lincolnshire. There they had hired a fishing-lugger, and escaped, safely landing on the shores of France, and, upon all sides, my name was confidently given as one of the party. I could have wished for nothing better, and this was the story to which Enid had referred.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Interpreter.

A couple of weeks slipped uneventfully by as far as I was concerned. I played my part, though it cost me a tight rein on my every waking moment. It was so easy to make a slip, so impossible to stitch up my mask if I ever made the slightest rent in it.

Enid's eyes grew troubled as the days went by. So grieved was she at the monotonous, drudging life I led, that she wished us to take the road once more under pretence of return, and seek out some place where I could be myself again.

She had also her own annoyances to undergo. It had pleased Jack Postgate to assume the position of her sworn admirer and pester her with attentions. Jack, of course, received every snub which could be politely administered, but the thickness of his skin was such that he drew not back an inch.

One afternoon, I was sitting at table in the kitchen, where a meal had just been concluded, when Siani came in and gave me a slip of paper, accompanying it with voluble directions, of which I understood never a word. I stared vacantly at the paper as she talked away among a titter of my fellow-servants, who always took a huge delight in hearing Welsh spoken, and discovered it was a request from Roger to the landlord of the village inn for a measure of Canary wine to be sent by bearer. This sounds as if my cellars had been but indifferently stocked, yet the truth is that, short as was the time troops had been quartered on the place, it had sufficed them to drink all dry, and Roger was in no mind to show he possessed cash by restocking.

I nodded when Siani paused, put the paper in my pocket, and marched at once.

I found Adam Bell, the landlord, in his kitchen, and delivered the paper. He gave me a glass of ale, and bade me sit down for a moment, for he was busy at the time. I drank the ale readily enough, but took no notice of his invitation, till his wife called out:

"The man understands ye not, Adam. Point to the settle, he'll know what ye mean, then."

My old acquaintance conducted me to a seat in dumb show, and bustled off about his business. He had company in the parlour, and I heard Jack Postgate's voice.

"Confound the fellow," thought I, "he's for ever hanging about Butley." Then I caught his words for Adam had left the doors open.

"What, landlord, that man here! The very fellow I want to come to speech with."

This puzzled me a little. It sounded as if Adam had been talking of me, yet how Jack Postgate should speak so confidently of winning speech with me was not easy to divine. Another scrap of conversation came across the passage, and my blood leapt up and drummed furiously in my ears.

"You can get all I want out of him," cried Jack.

"Yes, indeed," replied the person to whom he spoke, "I am a Welshman born and bred." Jack was coming at me with an interpreter, and already their feet rang on the flags of the passage, blocking the door without.

My first idea was to beat a retreat. But it was hopeless, and I must face it out, for Jack Postgate and a tall man now stepped in at the only door. Upon Jack I wasted not a glance, but fixed my eyes upon his companion. The man was tall, as I have said, and powerfully built. His face was smooth and thin, and would have been handsome but for a square, bony jaw. His hair was cropped close, and he wore a plain suit of decent brown, with boots and spurs.

"Here's the man," said Postgate, rubbing his hands in high satisfaction. "Now, I want you to turn him inside out like an old glove. Find out everything you can about his mistress, as I told you. And tell him to carry this letter to her," and he shook a letter which he held between thumb and finger. Here was a pleasant string of words to

fall into a man's ears about his wife, and he utterly bound, both in tongue and hands. I became suddenly aware that I was moving uneasily and restlessly on my seat, chafing furiously at the bonds of circumstance, and that the stranger's keen, bright eyes was fixed full on me. With an effort I gulped down my wrath and assumed an impassive air.

The tall man saluted me in Welsh, and I replied, for a simple thing, such as passing the time of day, I could manage. This I did of set purpose, for to refuse to make a sound at all might raise suspicions, while to be obstinately dumb when questions upon private matters were put would bear a natural explanation.

The stranger made a short speech full of rasping gutturals. He might as well have spoken Hebrew, and I stared sullenly into the fire. He spoke again. I remained silent.

"What's the matter with the fellow?" said Jack. "He's turned dumb all of a sudden."

"Well," said the stranger, "very likely he has been told to keep his tongue quiet."

"Try him again," cried Postgate, "try him again, and warn him that, if he doesn't speak, I'll lay this lash round his shoulders," and he cracked his whip as he spoke.

While this was going on I had been groping in my consciousness to fit two things together; the stranger's voice and a name—where had I heard it before, and whose was it? He began to speak in gentle, melting tones, and my heart leapt in my side. I pulled my hat lower and looked up. The first glance taught me that the utmost caution was needed. Jack Postgate was staring gloomily at me, angered by my silence; the stranger's broad, bright eye was bent upon me with infinite meaning and warning in the look. His voice ran on, liquid and even, and he paused, then, with the utmost slowness and deliberation, he added:

"Ieuan, Ieuan Gwyllt."

The utterance of this name had no meaning for his companion, everything for me. Yet was it not needed, for I had known him upon the beginning of his third speech. Other people could play at disguises, too. Ieuan's tangle of hair was gone, the forest of beard and moustachio which formerly hid his face to the very eyes had vanished, his worn and dirty clothes were replaced by a suit of sober colour and excellent texture; he had followed my own example in almost every point of his change, and my ignorance of him showed the strength of my own disguise.

I took my cue at once and looked down into the fire, and cleared my throat.

Jack Postgate took a step forward. I did not raise my eyes, but I heard Ieuan say:

"No, no, you will spoil everything. He iss going to speak, I have just persuaded him. Keep quiet." His tones were fierce and eager, and I knew Jack's whip hung in the air.

"He'd better be quick," growled Jack, whose temper was not of a nature to parley long with anyone whom he believed he could safely beat. I spoke a sentence from my stock, and glanced at Ieuan.

I happened to know the meaning of that. It was an invitation to come into the house, sit down by the fire, and rest awhile.

Ieuan listened gravely and attentively, and gave me a nod of intelligence, which meant a great deal more than his companion could perceive.

"Well?" cried the other, impatiently.

"He says," began Ieuan, "that he was silent because he has nothing to tell you."

"What does he mean?"

Ieuan spoke to me again, and I hauled up the phrases, and fag ends of speech that had been drilled into me, and we conversed in this fantastic style for some minutes. Not a muscle of his face moved as he received my astonishing replies, but he nodded his head thoughtfully, and appeared to be enlightened.

"Now you've got hold of something," said Postgate. "What is it?"

ASTHMA

BRONCHITIS,

CHEST DISEASES,

SHORTNESS OF BREATH,

BLOOD SPITTING.

Those suffering from the above receive **POST FREE** particulars of my Special Cure, which is not of a TRANSIENT, BUT A TRACEABLE, LASTING EFFECT, not only combating single symptoms, but removing the causes of those diseases. Therefore a

PERMANENT CURE

is assured.

I HAVE TRIED THE TREATMENT ON MYSELF, and have practised it for 18 years on many thousands of Special Cases with the very best results, and **MANY MEDICAL MEN AND MANY CLERGYMEN** have acknowledged to me that my cure is a successful one.

Officially confirmed letters of thanks testify to surprising successes by patients who have **SUFFERED FOR 30 YEARS**, and more, though in advanced years—say 70 to 80. Many are cured after having been

GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.

No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint and mention if you suffer from

COLD FEET.

PAUL WEIDHAAS, PULMONARY INSTITUTE,

16 T.A. BUCKINGHAM ROAD, BRIGHTON.

SPASMODIC ASTHMA (from Childhood) CURED.

"When I came under your treatment I was suffering from what the doctors called Spasmodic Asthma. The attacks generally came on in the night; if in the day-time I had to unfasten my clothes; my chest was very full while they lasted, and I have had a loud wheezing. My heart and nerves were left very weak. When the attacks went off, my chest felt hollow, and I had a dull pain over the heart, and my feet were nearly always cold. I often became chilly. I had the Asthma since my childhood. Now I am glad to say I have been cured by your treatment. I have no return at all of any of the symptoms, and I am very thankful for the freedom."—MRS. EVA GATLAND, Whytelcafe. (Full address on application.)

MR WEIDHAAS is prepared to pay

£1,000

to any Charitable Institution if the above are not genuine extracts from letters of patients. The originals may be seen at his Institute by any bona-fide inquirers.

"Well, it iss like this," said Ieuan. "I have got hold of nothing. This man was hired on the road and does not know anything in particular. The young lady started from her home with another man, an old man it wass, and he fell ill as they travelled. That was at a little pla e on the hills, about nine miles from Rhayader, a place called Bryngarw, so he says. The old man wass left there, and they told him to go back home when he wass better, and this man wass hired in his place."

Upon the simple story being narrated, with the utmost innocence of face, voice, and gesture, Jack Postgate fell to cursing, and, at that moment, Adam Bell entered with the vessel of wine.

"Here's for ye," said Adam, and handed me the vessel. The action interpreted for him, had there been need of it, and I stood up and took it, and went at once from the house. I was a good distance down the village when I hea d Ieuan shouting behind me. I looked back, and he was coming on, with a letter in his hand. I glanced round, but no one was near us.

"We must talk somewhere," said Ieuan, in a low voice. "Where? Tell me."

"When are you going on?" I asked.

"Any time; I do not care," answered he.

"Start from here," said I, "and keep straight south along the main road. Two miles on you will come to a heath, and half a mile further to a great, withered oak, standing alone. You cannot miss it. A dozen yards beyond the oak a rough heath road runs into the main. Turn up that and follow it for three miles, until you come to a deserted cottage beside the road. Wait for me there."

"I will do it," said Ieuan, and turned back at once. I looked over my shoulder as I went, and saw Jack Postgate at the door of the inn, watching us. At the same instant I became aware that Ieuan had thrust a letter and a piece of money into my hand and that I was carrying them mechanically.

Ieuan had said never a word about them, but I understood. Jack had remembered his letter to my wife, and sent it, naturally enough, by the messenger best fitted to explain to me what he wanted. Half-way up the avenue there was a bridge crossing the brook whi h runs through the park. I stood there and tore the letter into a thousand pieces and tossed them into the swift little stream.

I flung the piece of money after them, and went on, little thinking that I had now lent the chief hand to plucking my disguise from me.

CHAPTER XXX.

IEUAN'S ERRAND.

On reaching the house, I sought out Roger and handed over my charge. He was alone, as I had hoped, and I told him whither I was bound.

"Is he a safe man, Master Geoffrey?" whispered Roger. "Oh, be careful; it may be a plot to trepan you."

"Why, Roger, as to that," said I, "he knew who I was at the inn, and, if he had been minded to do me mischief, he had only to expose me to Postgate. I must see him, and find out what brings him about this country."

I went into the hall, and carried wood to replenish the fire. Enid was not there, and as I stood looking into the gallery, hoping she might come out of her room, a waiting-woman descended from the upper region. This woman I had detected as very watchful upon Enid and Siani, and indeed upon myself, though my supposed ignorance of the language caused me to be untroubled by inquisitive folk. She was of the Postgate faction, and without doubt was in the interest of the son, for I have never credited the father, though my enemy, with underhand work.

I went out of the house and made an opportunity to slip into the wood, which at one point ran up nearly to the garden wall, and was soon in the depths of it, making my way towards the meeting place I had fixed upon. It was still quite light when I reached it, and, after reconnoitring from an adjacent brake, I advanced upon it and found that I was first there. The road by which Ieuan would approach ran across the common, dipping into hollows, and winding through thickets and brushwood and was as grassy as the land on either side. It had been disused since the cottage was deserted but was still c'early marked by its deep ruts. I went slowly down it, keeping a sharp watch about me.

Half a mile from the cottage I saw a head against the sky, someone coming over a heathery slope before me. "Ieuan," thought I, then a second head came in sight and I dropped behind a clump of gorse and wound my way into it like a snake. It was not so much that I suspected Ieuan as that an instinctive wariness and caution had become a a part of my nature.

They came on, two of them, and talking Welsh. That, of itself, was a good sign and the first glimpse I had of Ieuan's companion reassured me. Him no disguise could conceal from his acquaintances. It was the dwarf harper.

I let them pass, for I feared to offend Ieuan's touchy temper by disclosing that I had hidden from them, then rose, and ran swiftly back by a circuitous path, and was seated on a bank beside the cottage when the two red men of the dusk rode up at a foot pace.

"Well," called out Ieuan, cheerfully, "we are meeting once more," and the harper waggad his huge elf-like head at me and smiled.

"Ieuan," said I, "how did you know me?"

"Indeed, not easily from your looks," laughed he, "but many things were helping me. For one thing I had found out that Owain's sister was at the house, and then I was sure that you were not far away. When I heard that only one man wass with them I wass ready to look for you in that man. And besides I had found that you could not show yourself openly. You never said to me that you were at Nant-y-Bryn to hide yourself."

"No, Ieuan, I did not," said I.

"Never mind for that," replied Ieuan, waving his hand. "Every man must look for himself. But, you see, I was already beginning to th nk you are that man, so it wass a great help for me to find you out."

"True," said I, "it was."

"Well," continued he, "the next thing iss that you are wondering what business brings me here. What have you been thinking since you found I was in your village?"

"I have formed no opinion at all on the matter," I replied. "It was a great surprise to see you, certainly."

"Surprise," repeated Ieuan. "That iss it. It iss all surprises. I came here thinking to see you a rich man, riding the beautiful mare about this country like a king. And I found a Siac y Mynydd."*

His tone was one of keen disappointment. A sudden light broke upon me, and I laughed, and laid a hand on his arm.

"Ieuan," said I; "I see it now. You came for that hundred pounds to stock the little farm."

"Yes, indeed," confessed Ieuan. "You have put your finger on the place. And when I wass on the road I wass so easy in my mind as if it wass in my pocket."

"How much money did you get out of Nant-y-Bryn?

"Very little, very little. I took it all, for it was of no use to the others, and they carried the rest of the plunder into the hills."

"Ay, ay," said I, "and what are the people of Nant-y-Bryn doing?"

"I believe they will be very happy there," replied Ieuan. "There iss no master over the place, and no one will be paying rent. Yes, they will be satisfied."

"And the house is gone?"

"The walls are standing," he replied; "no fire could harm them, but the rest iss ashes all."

* Jock a-mountain.

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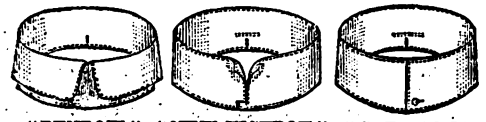

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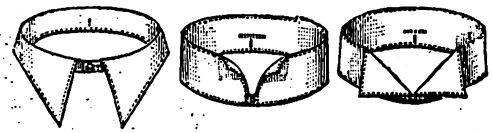

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"The walls are standing, eh?" I repeated; "then, Ieuan, you have been turning your back on your hundred pounds all the time."

"What!" he cried. "You know of some money hidden there?"

"I do," said I, and told him of the sum which I had unquilted from my coat and given over to the keeping of Sir Arthur.

"And why did you not ask for it back when you went away?" said Ieuan.

"I had plenty for my immediate needs," I replied, "and I was not on terms to have civil dealings with Sir Arthur."

Ieuan nodded and beat his fist lightly upon his knee.

"However," I continued, "we must see what can be done still."

"Do you mean that you can help me?" he asked quickly, "you, who look so poor."

"I who look so poor," I laughed. "I think I can do something yet. Mind, I do not promise for all. But I will get you a good share of it."

"You are making me very thankful," burst out Ieuan, "now I will tell you everything. I am very anxious, very anxious to get some money, for I have been feeling so sure of having it with you that I have been talking to Winny."

"I see, and she is going with you to the little farm, which was not a fancy after all, Ieuan."

"No," said, he, looking at me very slily, "but everybody is not telling everything."

"A fair hit," said I, "and where is this farm?"

"It is in the South," replied Ieuan; "I heard of it from a man I know very well when I was travelling that way about three months ago."

"And what will become of the Red Men of the Dusk without their leader?"

"I do not know, and, indeed, I do not care. I have done with them now. Dafydd, here, has begged so hard to come with me that I have said yes, and so he followed me here."

"Then you and Winny will get married?"

"Yes, yes," said Ieuan in a tone of exultation. "That is right."

"And the little boy?" I ventured.

"Winny's mother is very anxious to keep him, and he will be all right with her."

"That prisoner," I shot off at a tangent. "That fellow we tripped up on the ice, Ieuan, what of him?"

"I let him go, myself," replied Ieuan. "Yes, Gruffydd is in his own home to-day."

"I am glad of it," said I.

"You are wondering, perhaps, how I came to be talking to that man this afternoon," said Ieuan, "but it was just an accident. We came to that inn about mid-day, and after dinner I was in the yard talking to Dafydd when he came in. He stopped and listened and asked me what language we were speaking. When I told him, he begged me to come to the parlour to drink some wine with him. While we were doing that in you came, and then he brought me out, and of course I was anxious to see you, to find out what I could for myself."

I nodded and sat in thought for a few moments.

"Have you any food?" I asked.

"Plenty," said Ieuan. "We bought some at the inn, thinking we might want it to-night, and it nearly finished the money I had left."

"You must have spent a good deal on your clothes," I remarked. "You are both so fine that it's hard work to make you out."

Ieuan smiled a quiet, dry smile, and waved his hand carelessly. "Oh, we had them on the road," he said. The suspicion which had prompted my remark was confirmed, and I knew now that some unfortunate travellers had been turned adrift in their dirty and tattered garments, victims of an unprofitable exchange.

"Can you camp here till to-morrow morning?" I asked.

"That will be easy," replied Ieuan.

"Very well," I returned. "I will be here at daybreak with what money I can bring you."

And, upon this understanding, we parted. When I got back to the house I tossed a pinch of gravel against the lighted window of the room where Roger generally sat of an evening. He understood the signal and met me, five minutes afterwards in a sheltered nook at one corner, of the bowling green. When he heard my story he strongly urged me to give Ieuan his hundred pounds in full. Roger had now a considerable amount of money in his hands of which he had taken care that Sir John Postgate knew nothing. He had drawn in secretly several large sums immediately after my flight, seeing that evil times were close at hand.

"Give him his money, Master Geoffrey," said Roger. "Suppose he informed on you! What is his character?"

"Why, Roger," said I, "he is savage and vindictive, and a thief to his finger-tips. If he owed me a grudge he would handle my blood money with positive delight. But then 'tis his creed and his gospel. He was brought up to respect such ideas. These things apart, he is an excellent fellow, and, I am certain, is not bent at present on doing me harm."

"Take him his hundred pounds by dawn of day," said Roger, "every penny of it."

"I had thought of giving him the half," I replied. "It is not that I grudge him the money, but I cannot help looking ahead, Roger. Suppose I have to fly from here, again. Suppose Butley Croft could no longer afford a refuge to my wife, then that money would be needed for her use. And I scarcely feel inclined to give away a penny which might prove of service to her."

"Never fear for that," whispered Thorne, eagerly. "Leave me to handle that turn of affairs, Master Geoffrey, should it ever come. Besides the money in the house, there are several large amounts out in the hands of safe men of our own party; men who would never blab a word, ye render account to you or to me to the last penny. We can spare this hundred pounds to clear this man out of the country, easily, easily I say."

"He'll be off swiftly enough when he gets it," I returned, "for fear anyone should forestall him at Nant-y-Bryn. Coin or bullion, he'll touch another hundred there."

The upshot was that I slipped out of the house before peep of day the next morning with a small, heavy leathern bag, containing Ieuan's hundred pounds in gold. I received a score of compliments for every coin, and now Ieuan told me where he was to settle. It was on the border of Monmouthshire, and he intended to devote himself to the rearing of cattle and mountain ponies, a pursuit which he thoroughly understood.

(To be continued.)

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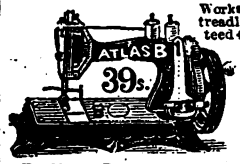

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

W. H. W.—The word costermonger is supposed to be derived from costard, an apple round and bulky, which was usually sold by the cla s of persons named herewith.

Barometers.—A French meteorological journal gives a list of plants which, by their behaviour under different atmospheric conditions, enable weather prognostications to be made. For instance, rain may be expected when the stalks of clover and other similar plants stand upright. The closing of the convulvulus, the pimpernel, the sorrel, and the bindweed, indicates rain also; while the opening of the sorrel, the African marigold, indicates fine weather.

P.—Try the following method of making luminous paper: Make a mixture of forty parts pulp, ten parts phosphorescent powder, one part of gelatine, one part of potassium bichromate, and ten parts of water. This is waterproof, and may be used when the common paint is not applicable.

Troubled (Winchester).—Eau de Cologne is a capital remedy for toothache. Place a few drops of this well-known scent on cotton-wool, and place in the tooth, or rub the gums and the portion of the face outside the painful tooth with eau de Cologne.

Trap.—The flamingoes which fish in a lake near Mount Ascotan, in the Andes, do not appear to profit by the misfortunes of their ancestors. This sheet of water is fed by a hot spring, which raises the temperature of the lake in the immediate neighbourhood of its inflow. But the rest of this Alpine tarn is frozen every night. Accordingly, the natives, knowing that if the birds fish in the colder places they will be frozen fast by their legs, visit it every morning to seize the imprisoned flamingoes before the hot sun thaws them out.

Window.—When the Palace of Trianon was building for Louis XIV. at the end of Versailles Park, that monarch went to inspect it, accompanied by Louvois, secretary of war, and superintendent of the building. Whilst walking arm-in-arm with him, he remarked that one of the windows was out of shape and smaller than the rest. This Louvois denied, and asserted that he could not perceive the least difference. Louis XIV. having had it measured, and finding that he had judged rightly, treated Louvois in a contumelious manner before his whole court. This conduct so incensed the minister that when he arrived home he set to work to bring about a war, and succeeded.

Curious.—It is a mistake to suppose that the English are singular in eating cross buns. The Swedes have their Lenten buns, very much like ours in shape and size, but somewhat lighter. They are eaten first on Shrove Tuesday, and afterwards during Lent. They are usually served at dinner, instead of pancakes, in a plate of boiled milk, with sugar and cinnamon strewed over them. The inside of the bun is stuffed with a paste made of sugar, almonds, butter, and cream, but without ginger.

H. Q.—From time immemorial the rose has been regarded as an emblem of silence, having been dedicated by Cupid to Harpocrates, the god of Silence. Presenting or holding a rose to a person was regarded as a signal to hold his tongue, and in rooms it was usual to place a rose above the table to signify that what was there spoken should be kept a secret.

Eye.—There are several well-authenticated instances of such abnormal vision. Here is one. A German tailor who died at Breslau in 1837 had such keen sight that he was able to see two of Jupiter's four moons with the naked eye.

K. B.—Two instances are recorded in which bees have been used as weapons of defence in war. When the Roman General Lucullus was warring against Mithridates, and sent a force against the city of Themiscyra, the besieged threw down on the invaders myriads of swarms of bees. These at once began an attack which resulted in the raising of the siege. The insects were also once used with equal success in England. Chester was besieged by Danes and Norwegian, but its Saxon defenders threw down on them the beehives of the town and the siege was soon raised.

H.—The Empress Josephine was the first to publicly use a pocket handkerchief. Her teeth were bad, and she gracefully concealed this defect by holding a costly handkerchief before her lips. The ladies of the Court followed her example, and the custom was thus inaugurated as a fashion.

Honey.—The following curious use of honey shows its power of preserving organic substances from natural decay. The Khasias, a semi-civilised mountain tribe of Northern India, always dispose of their dead by cremation. As this process, however, can only be efficiently carried out in the dry season, their furnaces being constructed in the open air, they preserve the bodies of those who die during the rains in rudely-shaped troughs filled with honey.

Gold.—As affording some idea of the amount of light gold now in circulation, it is stated that recently a financier in the City accepted £1,000 largely made up of half-sovereigns, and that, on the amount being weighed at his banker's, it was found to be short by £19.

Wren.—They hunt the wren in Ireland on St. Stephen's Day. Jenny seems to be hunted in a good many countries, and for a different reason in each. Our Irish friends regard her as the foe of freedom, and treat her accordingly. They say that, early in the history of Ireland, a body of Danes invaded the country. The invaders on one occasion ate and drank too freely, and the natives resolved to attack them. Before they could do this, however, a number of hungry wrens alighted on the drum-heads, which were strewn with the remains of the feast, the Danes having used them as tables, and made such a noise that the sleeping foreigners were roused.

Marble.—The little town of Carrara, near the famous quarries of that name, is literally built of white statuary marble. The very paving stones are composed of this material, when they are used; and where they are not, the roadway is made up and covered over with marble chips, which, in that district, serve the purposes to which the broken granite is applied here. The contrast between the squalid poverty of the furniture of the interior of the meanest dwellings in Carrara and the marble door-pillars, window-frames, flooring and mantel-slabs is very striking.

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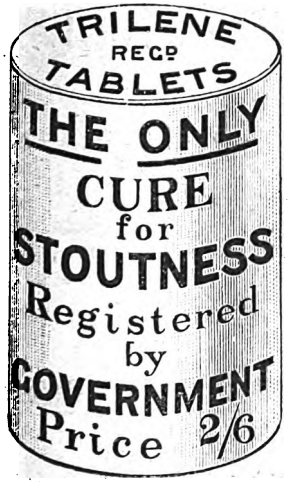

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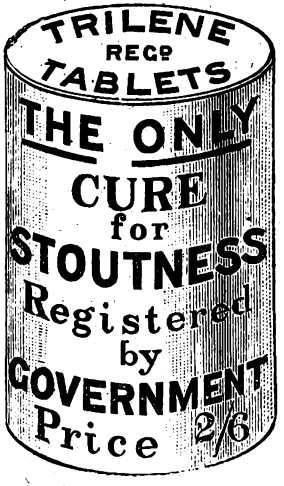

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SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 13lb.—my case, too, is hereditary

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 230 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 40 inches round waist; now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr, Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 92 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

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FOR A NEW FEATURE, SEE PAGE 752

June 17th, 1899.
S.S. No. 6. S.S.

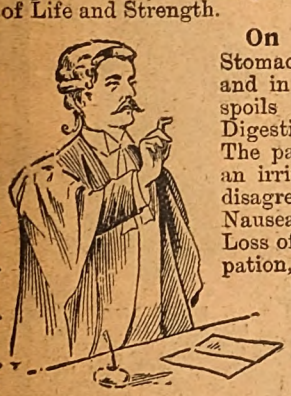
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 546. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 17TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

Helping the Stomach.

The Stomach is like "Fire," or "Water," a good friend, but a bad master. As a friend it craves work to do, which is shown by good Appetite, and it sets about its work with so much energy that we have efficient Digestion, and later on perfect Assimilation—the Source of Life and Strength.



On the other hand, the Stomach as a master works fitfully and in a sulky manner. This soon spoils the Appetite and ruins the Digestion. Then the suffering begins. The partially-digested food becomes an irritant, and we have a host of disagreeable Symptoms, such as Nausea, Flatulence, Distension, Pain, Loss of Appetite, Headache, Constipation, Sleeplessness, and a general tired feeling of Weakness.

Now we can change the Stomach from a despot master into a willing friend by simply helping it with occasional doses of Guy's Tonic, until it is shortly able to carry on its work without assistance. This useful Family Medicine is steadily growing in popular favour.

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"(Rev.) JACKSON HARDING."

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Design No. 97.—Half a Guinea.—Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable **Jaeger-terfield** Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or in the famous **Specialite Serge** for **Half a Guinea**. Costume complete. Carriage paid. 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at **5/6**; carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric, Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple. When ordering please give measurement round bust (under arms), length of sleeve inside, size of waist, and length of Skirt in front.

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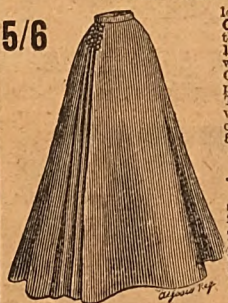

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No. 546.] [Week ending June 17, 1899.

SHORT STORIES

PRIVATE JOHN NORTON.

PRIVATE John Norton was a decided enigma to his comrades of Graham's Light Horse. It was not that he was evidently unused to the rough work that fell to his lot in the way of grooming horses, cleaning stables and harness, and the hundred-and-one odd things that make up the duty of a cavalry trooper, for there were many of his comrades of whom the same may be said.

Nor was it that in the frequent skirmishes with the Mahdi's followers, in which the Light Horse had taken part, Private Norton displayed a dare-devil recklessness which gave one the impression that life was but of little value to him; for many members of that gallant regiment exhibited a reckless dash which was to be attributed to something beside native bravery and pluck, though these, of course, were not lacking.

Nor again, was it only that he jealously guarded the secret of his past life, and could be tempted into no confidence respecting his real name or antecedents, for it was understood in Graham's Horse that nearly every man had a good and sufficient reason for wishing to veil his past history and name from curious eyes.

More probable it was that he seemed to be trying to foster within himself a cold, hard, and cynical disposition, which repelled all approach to friendship, and made good-fellowship impossible. In his creed, goodness, pure motives and disinterested kindness were things that did not exist, while on the subject of friendship or woman's love it was the firm opinion of John Norton's comrades that he was mad, and for some time after he joined it was considered to be a good joke in the messroom or canteen to start some story of devoted friendship or faithful love, just for the sake of hearing the volley of scathing sarcasms with which he greeted such narrations.

But after a time this amusement began to pall, and his furious fulminations were voted a nuisance, whilst he himself was shunned as a moody fellow, whose surly crotchets were not worth considering. As time went on Private Norton was fast becoming one of the most unpopular men in the ranks, for among any body of men, and especially in a camp, the one unforgivable sin is a want of good fellowship.

If a man lack the genial spirit of comradeship, his chance of popularity is very small, and very few of those around him will stay to inquire whether his defect arise from nervousness or moroseness, from the shyness that hinders geniality or the surliness that despises it.

One or two men there were, however, who, being closer observers than the rest, saw that this was not the natural disposition of our friend, and they came to the conclusion that he had had some blow which had changed a naturally sunny nature into that of a carping and bitter cynic, and that because someone in his little world had proved untrue, he was steeling his heart to the belief that unselfishness and faith had left the earth.

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One night the camp was quieter than usual, for early the next morning an advance was to be made in force for the purpose of dislodging the Arabs, who were lying in great numbers in the short scrubby bush that surrounded the camp. Private Norton was on sentry duty, and as he paced to and fro no sounds were to be heard except the frequent challenges of the numerous sentries, or here and there from an odd tent the sound of subdued conversation or a low snatch of song.

Very naturally in his lonely walk his thoughts turned to the morrow's fight and its possibilities. Suppose, he thought, that to-morrow night he should be lying somewhere in that scrub with face upturned to the sky.

Ah! well, in that case the bitterness that had been almost too hard to be borne would be at an end, and the feverish load laid down.

And yet, he thought, he would have liked things to be put to rights a little, and his name to be cleared before that happened. Would it ever be? Just then Sergeant Jacques, in a tent close by, troubled by similar thoughts and prevented from sleeping by the picture which would keep rising before his mind of a dear little girl far away in the quiet close under the shadow of the mighty minster, broke out into a song, which was fervent enough for a prayer,

"Some day, some day, some day I shall meet you,
Love, I know not when or how."

So he sang, little dreaming that the words came as a message to the heart of a comrade a few yards away. When John Norton caught the words he stopped short, and his carbine almost slipped from his nerveless hand. That song, on this night, too, of all others; and then as the song went on he forgot his surroundings, and his thoughts flew on, away from the rows of tents, away over the bushes that hid the enemy, past the sandy dunes that took such queer shapes in the dim light of the cloudy moon, beyond the far-off mountains standing like some dark barriers against the sky, away to the busy town in Yorkshire, where he had last heard that song.

Only eight months ago he had stood, full of confident trust and love, by the side of her to whom he had given his heart, while she sang this very song, and now—well, now he was Private Norton, of the Light Horse, for whom life held no hope, and death no terror.

And still in his tent, sleepless, Sergeant Jacques crooned out his song:—

"But when we meet some day, some day,
Eyes, clearer grown, the truth may see,
And every cloud shall pass away,
That darkens, love, 'twixt you and me."

Ah! why had Jacques chosen that song of all others, and at a time when he, perforce, must listen? "Every

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cloud shall pass away!" Would it, indeed, ever be so. See, the clouds had passed away from before the moon, and now every feature of camp and plain, and far-off mountain range could be clearly seen.

Was it an omen for good, a sign that some day all should be cleared up, or would to-morrow end it all? Long after the sound of his comrade's voice had died away, thoughts such as these stirred him with a great unrest, until at last there stole into his mind words which he had of en heard and uttere in the old days: "Put thou thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Strange the unbidden association of the two diverse thoughts—the one a question, the other a promise! "He shall bring it to pass." Was it true? or was it the empty echo of a dead faith? Anyhow the words had a helpful ring about them; and when his relief came, and he was free to lie down, he was able to calmly think over the past, the very remembrance of which had been so long jealously banished from his mind.

It had all been so sadly simple that it seemed almost impossible that so slight a cause should have such bitter fruit. The story will not take long in telling. James Thorne, now known to his comrades as Private Norton, was the rising young doctor of the small West Riding town of Calderbank. With excellent professional prospects, and secure in the affections of Clare Aston, the Vicar's daughter, he had seemed a fitting subject for the envy of those less happily placed.

One night, however, a runaway horse dashed madly down the main street of the town. Right in the horse's track and inevitably doomed unless speedy help was near, a small child trotted unconcernedly across the road. There was, however, time for an energetic and quick man to save the little one from its peril, and, as it happened, there was standing in the door of Thorne's surgery, not five yards away, a young man of his own size and build.

No sooner did he catch a glimpse of the rushing horse than, overcome by a sudden impulse of terror, he turned and fled into the house, leaving the bewildered and helpless little victim to be picked up presently, crushed and lifeless. Several people had seen the whole occurrence, and knew that he, and he alone, being the nearest, could have saved the child, and from that moment Calderbank held no place for James Thorne. The indignation and scorn of the public he would perhaps have faced; but when there came a stinging little note from Clare, freeing him from his promise on the ground that she could not marry a coward, it was too much for him, and, without seeing her again, he disappeared suddenly from the life and, for the most part, from the thoughts of the good people of Calderbank, who took this action on his part as sure evidence of his guilt, and as supplying the only redeeming point in his character, by showing that he had the grace to be ashamed.

And yet they had all been so completely mistaken, for the figure at the surgery door was not that of James Thorne, but that of Francis Aston, her brother; and it was to shield him, and also because his sweetheart had so readily believed evil of him, that James Thorne had taken up his burden and gone forth into the world, and that now, as Private John Norton, of the Light Horse, he was on the morrow to face the enemy.

Was he right to spoil his life in this way?

Well, he had done it for the best, and so Private John Norton fell asleep, to awake to the stirring sounds of the bugle proclaiming that the dawn had come, and with it the time for action.

* * * * *

At last the long fight was at an end. Many times during the day the issue had seemed to be very doubtful as again and again the fanatical hordes dashed themselves in apparently countless numbers on the small British square. At length pluck, endurance, and discipline had won the day, and far on into the evening the Light Horse pursued the routed and scattered foe, returning at last wearied and worn out to their well-earned rest.

Returned! Yes, such as were left of them, for the victory was not gained but at the cost of a very heavy death-roll. Somewhere out in the scrubby grass Sergeant Jacques was lying dead, and Private Norton was lying wounded almost unto death. Three days afterwards, when the papers in England were full of the "glorious victory," a fair young girl, under the minster shadow in the northern city, was breaking her heart because among the list of the dead she saw the name of Sergeant Jacques, while at Calderbank, Clare Aston read with indifference that Private Norton, who was dangerously wounded, was recommended for the Victoria Cross for distinguished bravery in rescuing a wounded comrade.

Could she only have known that this Private Norton was none other than the one for whom she had been seeking vainly for months past, how her indifference would have vanished. Could he, fuming and fretting in the hospital tent, but have known that in the two months' old *Times* which the man in the next bed was reading, there was an advertisement beseeching a certain "J.T." to come back and forgive, and signed "Clare," what a valuable assistant that short sentence would have been to the overworked surgeon who looked after him. For, unknown to him, that which he had longed for had been brought to pass, and all Calderbank was waiting to do honour to the man who had sacrificed himself for another's sake.

Francis Aston had disappeared from home soon after Thorne, and the week after there appeared in the *Calderbank Herald* a letter signed by him entirely freeing his friend and making full confession of his cowardice.

But Clare Aston did not know who Private Norton was, and Private Norton did not see the *Times*, but lay in his bed in a very irritable state of mind, knowing full well that he would never be any more good to the Light Horse or to any other regiment, but fully persuaded never again to set foot in England. He had almost forgotten his thoughts of the night before the battle, and the old promise had passed from his memory—so had ceased to be a comfort.

And so for a month or more this state of affairs continued, until one morning there marched into a hospital a gentleman who was entirely unknown to our friend, but who walked up to his bedside with a cheery smile, and with the greeting, "Well, Mr. Thorne, I am delighted to see you at last." It only remains for us to say that this stranger was the celebrated inquiry agent, Mr Kenwit, who, after much patient tracing, had succeeded in finding in Private Norton the long-lost James Thorne.

Need we say more than that Mr. Kenwit's employer was a certain Mr. Aston? But readers will easily guess the rest—how a rapid recovery was made; how to one passenger at least on board the homeward-bound steamer *Trojan*, the daily progress seemed absurdly slow; how it was not long before all Calderbank gathered one morning at the parish church to witness such a wedding as had never before been seen there?

Hester Lawrence.

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By E. MILLS.

V.—When Rosemary Grew.

"Crying! Why, Rosemary, what on earth has happened?"

The young man who made this startled exclamation placed his gun carefully against a tree, and then sprang across the narrow ravine that separated him from the tumbled heap of faded print and tangled chestnut hair which was all that could be seen of Miss Rosemary Rae.

He knelt down awkwardly beside her, and put one of his sun-browned, work-coarsened hands on her shoulder.

"What are you crying for?" he said again.

She jumped up and threw back her mane of hair from her flushed, tear-stained face.

"I'm crying because I'm pretty," she answered defiantly.

"But girls like to be pretty. I can't fancy folk crying about a thing like that."

"Oh, no! you never would," said Miss Rae, with conviction. Though her meaning was not quite certain, his evident want of good looks was. His naturally fair-skinned face was burnt to a fiery crimson, and his side whiskers were sandy, and his hair but a shade darker; it was a good, honest face, and that was all one could say for it. To make up for it a little, his figure was good, in a sturdy, well-knit style, and he looked at his best in his present costume, of blue shirt, moleskins, and gaiters.

"Still," continued the girl, "you won't feel happy in a moment, when I tell you all. I'm going away to-morrow for good, and all because I am *pretty*."

The scorn with which she accented this last word was indescribable.

"Going away, Rosemary?" The dismay of his voice was indescribable also.

"Yes, someone—a passing drover, I think—told someone else, who told Aunt Anne Leigh that her sister (that's mother, you know) had pretty daughters, and Aunt Anne wrote last week, and said that one of us must come to her in Sydney for two years, and share every advantage of education, and all that, with her daughter; only mother must send the prettiest she has, and so I have to go," and Rosemary began to sob again.

Harry Smith reviewed rapidly in his mind the faces and forms of Rosemary's many sisters. They were all nice-looking—but no, there was no doubt at all, the eldest Miss Rae was the pick of the basket. Even the tear-stains, the untidy hair, the skimpy, badly-cut frock, the clumsy boots, could not alter the fact that she was a really pretty girl.

"Clover isn't too bad," he said at length, but in the tone of one who catches at straws.

"I begged mother to send her—but there's no doubt her hair is red. No, they all say I must go—oh! oh! oh! I shall have to let Cousin Mabel's maid do my hair and squeeze in my waist, and even lace up my boots; it's too bad. Oh, Harry, couldn't you marry me now and save me from this?"

The young man shook his head.

"Wool is so low this year, and your dad would never hear of it until you are older."

Rosemary's face fell.

"I'm only seventeen," she said, "and I know by my frocks I'm growing still. Dad says I'm not to dream of marrying until I have finished growing, so I suppose that's impossible."

"Like enough you will forget all about me amongst all your grand friends," said Harry jealously.

Rosemary regarded him with serene scorn. "I don't break my promises," she said sternly. "I mean to live and die in the bush; and when I have finished growing you can come for me, and I will leave the horrid town and stuck-up town people—gladly—just you see if I don't."

"You will find the selection a bit lonely at first," suggested Smith, anxiously.

"Oh, no; it is so close to Emu Flat—one of the girls can always ride over to see me. But don't you forget to come and rescue me, now, will you?"

"I love you, Rosemary," was all the answer he made; but it satisfied Miss Rae; as, indeed, it well might, for the light blue eyes of this undemonstrative young bushman said more than his words could do. He was a man, full-grown in body and mind, and Rosemary, only a child with a woman's form—a fact which the former did not realise then—and so he felt almost happy as they

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walked along the sandy road which led to the ramshackle old station house, which lay in the shadow of the ranges, and she tered the happy-go-lucky, poverty-ruled household of the Raes.

There were a tribe of little children, and three big, loutish, handsome boys, and two girls named Clover and Myrtle.

The only luxury hard-worked Mrs. Rae allowed herself was the reading of the *Sabbath Herald*, and from its heroines she chose her daughter's names.

Jack Rae had never been a successful or lucky man, and Mrs. Leigh's offer seemed too good to refuse. Still, they were all more solemn than usual when they assembled in the big, dark dining-room on this, the last evening, when they should all be together for two long years.

The young children eyed Rosemary somewhat as if she were a criminal under sentence of death, and her mother's thin, work-worn face looked sadder and more depressed than usual. She had known luxury and soft living in her long-past youth, and was not anxious to see her eldest daughter follow in her footsteps, to the extent of marrying in her teens, and taking up the hard life of a struggling selector's wife.

"No!" he answered, "I won't forget."

Smith stayed to tea with them, and felt as if the salt beef and fried potatoes would choke him. He could not take his eyes off Rosemary, who looked pretty as a picture, in spite of the lace monstrosity and tarnished locket and chain she had added to her print frock, in the way of evening decoration. Mrs. Rae saw the "collarette" and shook her head, and then glanced at the girl's toil-coarsened hands, and noted how she swung her arms when she walked. "Annie will have her work cut out, I'm afraid," she murmured; "there's a lot to alter. I never had the time to attend to anyone but the babies!"

After tea Smith smoked in silence with Mr. Rae on the veranda—there was nothing fresh to talk about in this monotonous western life—and then, when Rosemary came in from the kitchen, he went out to get his horse. The girl walked as far as the slip-rails with him, and cried a little when he kissed her good-bye.

As for Harry, his was the grief too deep for expression.

"You will come for me when I have finished growing—you won't forget?" she cried as he swung into his saddle.

"No!" he answered, "I won't forget."

* * * * *

Mabel Leigh told her mother that you could have knocked her down with a feather when she went to meet Rosemary at Circular Quay. "Such an apparition—can you imagine it? She had a coat and skirt on made of black muslin—yes, actually black muslin—and a pink silk affair she called a 'front,' and the skirt had a flounce and a light train! and she had a silver locketland chain round her neck, and a black velvet toque, with a red parrot's wing in it! She had, really. She was standing beside a yellow shoe-trunk, and no end of parcels and bundles. You should just have seen Holmes's face when I told him to take Miss Rae's luggage."

Mrs. Leigh had just returned from a trip to the Blue Mountains, and so missed the arrival of her Queensland niece. She listened to Mabel's narrative with deep sympathy.

"And, of course," continued Miss Leigh, "the wharf was just crowded with all the smartest people. The Stainers had a steam launch party on, and Harold Stainer was talking to me."

"'Who on earth is that queer little fish?' he said. 'But, by Jove, she's pretty' and then I knew it must be Rosemary, and, sure enough, it was."

"Then she is pretty?" said her mother eagerly.

"Yes! she will satisfy even you," answered Mabel, who was not a beauty herself, but owned a certain dash and style that gained her a good deal of attention. She was a nice girl, and did her best to put poor Rosemary at her ease. Everything in the big, luxurious house, on the South Head Road, was strange to the shy bush girl, and she hated everything and everyinmate in it royally for the first week. Mabel convinced her tactfully that she was tired, and kept her rather shut up until the dressmaker had finished her work, and then it was that Rosemary began to take more interest in her surroundings. There was a big pier-glass in Mabel's room, and Rosemary beheld herself in it beautifully and stylishly dressed for the first time in her life. Her cheeks flushed with delight as she tried on one frock after another.

"Why, Mabel, I look almost as nice as you do," she said, admiringly gazing from the reflection in the glass to her cousin's slight figure, in its smartly-cut tweed frock.

Mabel smiled a little sadly. She was a plain woman in spite of all the arts that aided her, and she knew it. "How the men will spoil her!" she thought. Aloud she said, "I really believe you look a shade 'nicer' than I do, even. Try on this white linen, Rosemary, and then we must hurry down to lunch."

Rosemary's mornings after this were busy with

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masters; she learnt quickly, if superficially, and added dancing and singing to her accomplishments, which hitherfore had consisted of the arts of cracking a stock-whip, swimming and riding well.

In the afternoon Mrs. Leigh whirled her off to garden-parties and At Homes, and Rosemary got through them fairly well, being quick to observe and imitate. Certainly, at her first afternoon tea she, being hungry, made a substantial meal of thin, rolled bread and butter, and lovely, mysterious cakes, but she quickly learnt to toy with one tiny roll in her well-gloved fingers, and to refuse to take more than one cup of tea.

Life was full of joy for Rosemary in those days, and the beauty over which she had wept was the golden key that unlocked the halls of pleasure. "Everyone is so nice to me," she wrote in her home letter, "and town men are really not so bad. They are awfully polite, and one soon gets use to their white hands."

She took to the luxury as a fish to water, and afforded much amusement to Miss Leigh, who watched the process of the evolution of the butterfly indulgently. All the more did it amuse her because in one thing Rosemary remained obdurate: she was going to marry a certain "Mr. Smith," and to live in a two-roomed cottage on a selection, because she had "promised."

Mrs. Leigh was amused also, but she became slightly alarmed when the rich English cricketer laid his heart and fortune at Rosemary's feet and was promptly refused.

Then Mr. Leigh's middle-aged but vastly eligible partner followed in the cricketer's footsteps and shared the self-same fate; and Rosemary's aunt became seriously vexed. "This cannot go on," she said one evening to her daughter. "There's young Harold Stainer evidently deeply smitten, and of all the young men I know I would rather see him the husband of any girl I cared about. There was a time when I thought you rather liked him, Mabel, and that he was interested in you; but this time the affair is quite apparent. And yet, if he proposes, Rosemary will talk of Mr. Smith and the selection. What am I to do?"

"In this case," answered Miss Leigh quietly, "perhaps you are right to give fate a helping hand. Rosemary is quite unfitted for life in the bush as a poor man's wife—now that she has taken so kindly to the fleshpots of Egypt. If you want my advice, mater, it is this. Tell Mr. Stainer to play a waiting game—he is clever enough to do that, and send for Mr. Smith. I think he can be calculated upon to 'cook his own goose,' to put it vulgarly, if plainly."

And so Mrs. Leigh wrote two letters—one to Mrs. Rae, inclosing another to Mr. Smith. The latter was a marvel in its way. It contained an invitation—among other things—and as Harry had done well with his wool this year, and was longing with all the strength of his big honest heart to see the sweet face of Rosemary Rae again, he decided to run down to Sydney, and have a look round, making the Leighs' house headquarters, as Mrs. Leigh so kindly suggested. Visions of "long days" sailing in the harbour with Rosemary, climbing the post-office tower with Rosemary, sitting in the wonderful gardens with Rosemary, flitted through his brain—and he saw all the world through rose-coloured glasses. With care he could build a little house when he came back, and at the end of the year the place would be ready for her. He was busy breaking-in one of his best horses for her, up to the day he left. He bought a new pair of boots, a round black felt hat, and a new black cloth ready-made suit, at the store in the township, and with his valise, and a parcel tied in a red cotton handkerchief, he started on the journey which was to end with so much joy—and Rosemary.

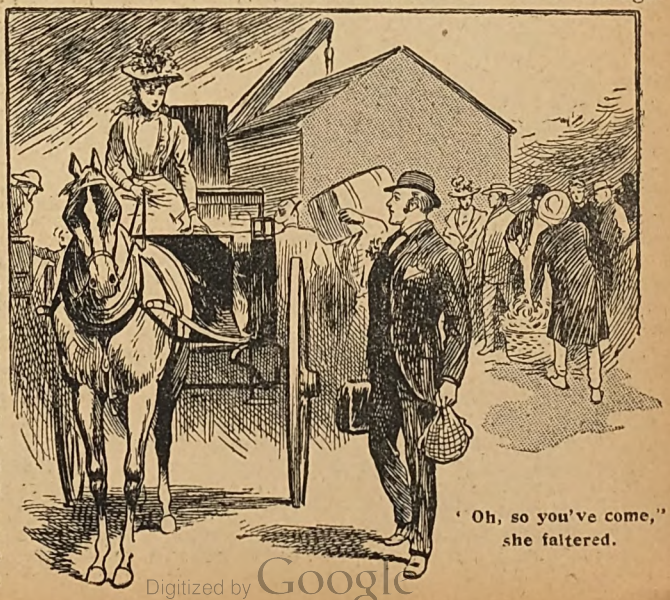
Meanwhile Rosemary was finding Harold Stainer a very pleasant companion. He was always ready to do her bidding, to bring her the latest news or the newest books, and, above all, he danced divinely, and Rosemary had all the passion of lately aroused love for dancing—there seemed nothing on earth so delightful to her as a waltz, with perfect music and a perfect partner.

Then, again, he never worried her about marriage, and seemed to quite understand why she must stick to Mr. Smith. He was not a handsome man—one of Nature's laws (though with many exceptions) seems to be that plain men adore pretty women, and *vice versâ*—and none of Rosemary's lovers had been Adonises; but the young barrister's clever, sharp-featured face, with its restless, deep-set eyes, was of quite a different style of ugliness from Harry's homely, sun-crimsoned countenance. He has a certain air of distinction which would have made him noticeable anywhere, and Rosemary was rather proud of her friend.

She drove the little tax-cart down to the wharf herself to meet Harry Smith, and scanned the faces of the incoming passengers narrowly. She was dressed in a light linen frock, and had white shoes, gloves, and a white parasol, and a hat that seemed like a miniature garden of blue cornflowers, and she looked as fresh and lovely as the flower of spring herself.

Now, as Smith left the gangway he became aware of an Indian hawker selling bananas for the absurd price of fourteen for sixpence. He was immensely struck with the cheapness of the fruit, which was sold for half-a-crown a dozen in the bush township, and which was there regarded as a great luxury, even after its long journey in the boot of the coach.

"By Jove! what a chance; I must take some to Rosemary," he thought, and he promptly bought a shilling's worth, and tied his handkerchief round the dubious brown paper bags—to facilitate their carriage.



"Oh, so you've come," she faltered.

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Rosemary saw a rough-looking young man in an ill-fitting black suit, and with low-crowned felt hat on his head, buying bananas, but she hardly "took him in" until he turned and saw her, and then the glorified face was so noticeable that she recognised him. Yes, this dreadful-looking young man was Harry Smith, side whiskers, sun-burnt, and all.

"Oh, so you've come," she faltered.

"Come, I should think I have. Did you think I wouldn't keep my promise. Yes, Rosemary, you have grown."

"Two inches," said the girl. "I was measured yesterday; jump in, Harry. Is that all your luggage? Oh! well, it can go in here, too, and now tell me all about the people at home," she rattled on nervously, and tried not to think, as she skilfully threaded her way through the narrow, winding streets.

"He will look quite different to-morrow when he has been to a decent tailor," she thought, quite forgetting that men are never so adaptable or so imitative as women, and that he was perfectly satisfied with his new store suit and shiny felt hat.

Rosemary passed several girls and men whom she knew in George Street, and one and all looked astonished, and she felt that her cheeks were almost as crimson as her companion's whole face. When she drew up at the hall door and the stately Holmes came out to assist with the luggage, there was nothing for him to carry but the bananas, as Harry stuck to the valise; and matters were not improved by the bags bursting, and the portly Holmes being obliged to go down on his hands and knees and pick up the fruit.

At lunch Mrs. Leigh and Mabel tried tactfully to cover his mistakes, but they were many, although he erred chiefly on the side of over-politeness, passing things so quickly to the three women that Holmes was obliged to stand in offended idleness. And Rosemary saw it all and was as yet too young to understand how very little it really mattered.

After tea Harold Stainer appeared—well-groomed, as usual, from the top of his sleek black head to the tips of his patent-leather shoes—and his advent had a paralysing effect on Harry, who longed to be outside smoking, and away from all this strange conventional society. Harold seemed to take it for granted that Miss Rae would be engaged with her friend, and he took a new song to the piano, and asked Mabel to try it for him. She sat down with a strange, half-mocking smile on her face. There was a look of self-pity under it all—such as a person might look who was obliged to sharpen the sword destined for his own destruction.

"Perhaps you would like to show Mr. Smith the famous harbour view, Rosemary," she said.

Rosemary was looking her best that night, with the colour flaming in her cheeks, and her lovely neck and shoulders rising from the filmy lace of her evening dress.

Smith watched her closely as she parted the crimson curtain, and led the way to the verandah, and his thoughts went back to the parting by the slip-rails, and the slender figure in the skimpy, faded print frock, whose shortness made her look so young and childish. There was no doubt of it, Rosemary had grown.

They sat down on the verandah chairs and looked at the dancing lights in the harbour, and listened to the subdued roar of the city.

Stainer was singing in a sweet baritone, trying over the new song, and Rosemary felt vexed to think how contented he was without her—and at last Harry spoke:

"Well, my girl," he said, "will you be ready to come back with me? We're all homesick for our little Rosemary."

"When are you going?" faltered the girl.

"On the 22nd."

"Oh! impossible; the first Government-house ball is on the 30th. I could not go before that."

"There will be no dances on the selection, Rosie. I'm afraid you will find it dull."

Rosemary sighed. "Oh no! not at all," she said politely.

"I'd be dead in a week if I had to live in a city," he continued. "Anyway I've added a bit to the cottage, and my clip sold well this year. I calculated we could marry in October. Will you make me the happiest chap in the world, sweetheart?" and he took one of her white hands gently in his own.

"Don't cry," he said, "I'm not going to make you keep it."

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A sudden memory of the old life, the monotony, the roughness, the hard work, swept over her, and she could hardly frame her low-toned answer.

"I—I suppose I promised," she said faintly, "and I always keep my promises," and then she began to cry.

He jumped up and stood before her. "Don't cry," he said, "I'm not going to make you keep it. You've grown, Rosemary, in more ways than one—grown out of the old life and me, for one thing."

"It's true," sobbed Rosemary. "I don't love you enough to give up all this for you, but I thought I did. Believe me, I thought I did, or I should never have let aunt send for you. Oh! you must stay a long time, and have a really jolly visit. I will do all I can to make you enjoy yourself."

"Stay and see that cursed lawyer hanging round you!" interrupted the bushman, with sudden heat.

Then his voice softened again.

"Not but what he's more fitted for you than I am. No: I'm going now at once. You can send my things to the Metropole to-morrow. I'm going because I love you in a way you can't understand. I'm not even going to kiss you, lest I couldn't leave you, and would make you keep your promise."

Rosemary sprang to her feet with a sudden rush of remorseful feeling, and held out her hands appealingly. But Harry knew that this was the pity that is not akin to love, and he flung her hands almost roughly from him; and in a few minutes was walking quickly down the gravel sweep, battling with the greatest sorrow of his life.

There is little more to tell.

Mrs. Leigh was a successful diplomat, and Rosemary fulfilled her destiny and married the barrister, and became one of Sydney's gayest and loveliest society matrons.

And no doubt, as time went on, Harry would fulfil his, and marry some good, homely girl, who would keep his house and many children in perfect order; but I doubt if he would ever quite forget the dream that was to have been fulfilled when Rosemary grew.

NUTSHELL STORIES.

The story of a man who had a nose so large that he could not blow it without the use of gunpowder has turned out to be a hoax.

Gentleman (to itinerant vendor of plants, "I say, those plants you sold me the other have no roots to them."

Vendor: "Well, guv'nor, I've got the roots if you like to buy 'em. I charge hextra for roots."

A little girl four years old, walking in the country, and seeing a lot of black cows and a few white ones in a field grazing, remarked:

"Papa, do those white cows give milk and the black ones tea?"

"Witness, I believe you said you were an innkeeper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know the prisoner at the bar?"

"Well, that depends. When 'e 'as the money about 'im I do, but when 'e wants to put it on the slate I don't."

Mr. Ward gives some amusing specimens of the shrewdness and humour of some savages. For example, one of them brought him a fish which was abominably stale.

"White men," said Mr. Ward to the native, "don't eat fish that smell like that."

"But," answered the native, "you don't eat the smell."

Lady: "Here, my poor man, is a ticket for a dinner at a soup-kitchen; and you can eat as much there as will suffice for to-morrow and the day after."

Mendicant: "Thank ye kindly, mum; but I'd rather like first to eat enough for yesterday and the day before. If it would make no difference to you, write that down on the ticket."

The recent formation of a Domestic Servants' Union in Australia has already begun to bear fruit in the shape of "soft-sawdering," deferential advertisements of mistresses in the newspapers. Here is a lovely one that appeared in a Melbourne journal the other day: "Girl, useful, tidy, wanted by married couple; no children, comfortable home, very easy place, side gate, etc."

When a man finds a button in his salad he will hardly take the excuse that it is part of the dressing.

A man never gets married so many times that he will not hold his breath at the part of the ceremony where those who have objections are invited to come forward.

Facetious Old Gent (showing a false set of teeth to his granddaughter): "There, my dear! I told you when next you honoured me with a call I'd show you my new set of dining-room furniture."

Farmer (with gun, who has just put up a sign: "To Trespaissers—prepair for eternity"): "I like the idea, somehow or other. It has a religious feelin' runnin' through it, and at the same time means business."

Irish Porter (calling out the name of station): "Patricksewell!"

Tommy Atkins (from a third-class compartment window): "Glad to 'ear it. We 'ope Biddy's in good 'ealth, too."

Tangle: "Hang it all, Maria; that confounded poodle of yours has bitten a piece clean out of my leg."

Mrs. Tangle: "Oh, how very annoying, Henry, when poor Fido is ill, and the doctor said that he mustn't have a bit of meat for at least two weeks."

Tomdik: "You didn't put in an appearance at the club last night!"

M'Clammy: "No; I was regulating the earth!"

Tomdik: "What do you mean?"

M'Clammy: "You have heard that, according to *Home Notes*, 'the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world?'"

"The contribution-box will now be passed for the heathen," announced the minister.

"Why, pa, you put a bad half-crown on the plate," whispered Miss Bagley.

"That's all right," replied the father. "You don't suppose a cannibal knows the difference between that and a good half-crown, do you?"

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How the Lost Confidence was Restored.

On board the *Australasia*, bound for London from Melbourne. Off Cape Horn. Night very foggy, and wind blowing hard.

Miss Florence Fortescue's *cabin*. Miss F. *in her berth; very pretty and young, thoroughbred features, soft brown Irish eyes, dark hair, pale and very delicate-looking after severe illness; listening with a rather wistful expression on her face. Enter* Dr. Woods *(ship's doctor) tall, broad-shouldered, good-looking, florid complexion, blue eyes, large light moustache, and fair hair; an expression of strong suppressed excitement and anxiety, but trying hard to look natural and unembarrassed.*

Miss Fortescue.—Well, Mr. Doctor! I thought you had quite forgotten your patient this evening. Do you happen to know what time it is?

Dr. Woods.—Yes; it is nearly eleven. You must forgive me for being so late. I have had a very busy evening, and there has been such a row going on overhead. I knew it was no good to give you your sleeping draught.

Miss F.—No, indeed; what *have* they been doing? I really began to wonder if there was anything the matter; but I was sure you would come and tell me if there was much wrong.

Dr. W.—I can hardly tell you anything yet; for the fog only lifted a short time ago. That was one thing that kept me so late. I wanted to bring you the news; but the Captain is not to be spoken to at this moment. And how are you feeling to-night—a little stronger?

Miss F.—Ever so much. I mean to go on deck to-morrow whether you give me leave or not. *(Renewed noise and bustle on deck: a sharp look of trouble crosses the Doctor's face.)*

Miss F. (continues).—Oh! Don't look so awfully anxious Doctor. Of course I don't mean it. You know how good I am about obeying your orders; but I *am* sick of this wretched little cabin, and I am really nearly well now—thanks to your good care, I know. But I do so long to go on deck.

Dr. W.—Well, Miss Florence, you've lost nothing by not going up for the last ten days; neither sun, moon, nor stars have been visible, nothing but fog day and night, and bitter cold. But if the sun shows to-morrow I promise to take you up for a short time. Do you think you could walk up and down for a little, now that you are stronger?

Miss F.—Of course; why, one would think I had been at death's door to hear you, Doctor! Every mile we get nearer England will make me better now, you'll see.

Dr. W.—Are you so *very* eager to be at the end of your voyage, then?

Miss F.—What an odd person you are! A minute ago you seemed to remember how ill I had been; now you wonder that I should long to be on shore and well again. It's not so very astonishing, is it? But what ails you to-night, Doctor; what are you so preoccupied about?

Dr. W.—Really nothing at all, I assure you. I was only wondering if I had given a rash promise about taking you on deck. You have a warm fur cloak, I think, haven't you? Where do you manage to stow it in this little cabin?

Miss F.—Well, you certainly are dreaming. Why, look—you are leaning against it at this moment; it's hanging up behind you on the door.

Dr W (turning round and quietly taking a fur cloak off the door).—It *is* a nice warm one, and must cover you from head to foot, it's so long; and have you a fur cap to wear with it?

Miss F.—Yes, naturally; but, Doctor, don't you think it is a little late to be examining my wardrobe to-night? I don't want to be rude; but isn't it time for such a very delicate person as you seem to think me to go to sleep?

Dr. W.—High time; but do you really think I should be fooling over what you are to wear to-morrow if there was any chance of your getting to sleep? Miss Florence *(quickly)* you have not taken your sleeping draught yourself, of course?

Miss F.—Not exactly. Listen to that! Much use in your sleeping medicines while they are making that noise over my head.

Dr. W.—You admit I am not keeping you awake, then; and you know you were reading when I came in, weren't you? I shall have to stop your light after hours if you wear out your eyes in this way. What is your book?

Miss F.—Oh, a book you have read ages ago, I dare say—*Jane Eyre*—but it's the first time I ever had the chance, and do you know, I was so horribly frightened at that mad woman, I nearly jumped out of my berth when you knocked at the door just now. I was so glad you did not feel my pulse when you first came in. I did not mean to confess what a little goose I had been; but I was really frightened.

Dr. W.—Are you very easily frightened? Do you faint when you are?

Miss F.—Faint! *never! (with disdain).* I told you before I was no coward. I am not a bit afraid when there's anything *real* to frighten one; it's only horrors in books and ghost stories over the fire at night, and such things, that make me shake.

Dr. W.—Suppose we were ever in danger on this voyage, would you do what I told you quietly and without hesitation?

Miss F.—I should be quiet, I know, and—"do what you told me"? Yes *(saucily)*, Mister Doctor, I believe I should at once; but why? Is there any chance of our being in danger? Somehow, one never thinks of that in a big ship like this.

Dr. W.—Oh, no, no; there never is, never. I only asked to see what you would say; it was very silly of me.

Miss F.—Don't be alarmed. I assure you I am as cool as a cucumber—indeed cooler, for it's anything but warm to-night. But why did you ask me that?

Dr. W.—May I tell you one reason why I asked you? No, don't answer me; I will, I *must*, tell you now. I know it's not the place, the time; but, good Heavens! you don't know, you will forgive me afterwards, but you must see, you must know how I love and worship you. From the first moment——

Miss F. (putting out her hand as if to prevent him).—Oh, stop, stop!

Dr. W.—No, I won't, I cannot. When you came on board that first day, and your father brought me up to you and said, 'Doctor, I put her into your charge; you will take care of my daughter,' and you looked up at me with your eyes swimming in tears—I knew then, that very moment, that I was done for, that nothing in life would

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ever matter much to me again unless I could have you to take care of always—always, my darling!—unless——

Miss F.—Oh, you *must* stop; you have spoilt everything. I thought you *knew*, and that it was all just goodness that made you so kind to me.

Dr. W.—Knew what? what is there to know? you can't, you are too young to be—to care for anyone else yet. Tell me it s not that!

Miss F. (*rather haughtily*).—I don't know what you mean by too young. I shall be eighteen my next birthday, and I was engaged a whole year ago. What do you suppose I am leaving my own people in Australia for now? You must have known.

Dr. W.—No, indeed; I swear I never guessed a word of it. Your father told me you had not been well, that the climate did not suit you, that you were going back to England.

Miss F.—As if I should leave him for anything but —*that!*

Dr. W.—I thought it was only for a time, for the sea voyage—oh! I don't know what I thought—I only know I am the blindest idiot to have hoped, and a madman to have spoken to you to-night. And now I have only made you hate me—and yet—(*sudden quiet on deck. A look of intense relief on the Doctor's face*).

Miss F.—Now you are talking nonsense—hate you, who have almost saved my life by your care and nursing! No; I am not quite such an ungrateful wretch—but it has spoilt things to me, and somehow I can't feel as if you had been quite so unselfish and good, now that I know you were caring for me. But why do you look so different all of a sudden? You look almost glad now. I can't make you out, Dr. Woods: you are not one bit like yourself. Do forget all this nonsense; let us pretend you knew all along, and let things be as they were before this horrid night. Will you not? and leave me now—it is quiet at last overhead. Good night! Promise me you will never talk of this again during the rest of the voyage—never once?

Dr. W.—I must once more—to-morrow, Miss Florence, in justice to myself, and perhaps to get back a little of your good will. To-morrow—but do not fear, I shall never bore you again after that. May I give you your bromide before I go? You see I am only 'the Doctor' again already.

Miss F.—Thanks! (*takes the medicine and puts out her hand rather coldly*). Good-night, Dr. Woods.

Next morning, on deck. Miss F., *in the fur cloak, coming up the companion, leaning on the Doctor's arm and looking very frail in the full daylight. Both seem embarrassed and awkward.*

Miss F.—At last! It feels like getting out of prison —three mortal weeks have I been in that wretched cabin, and there was one moment when I was pretty sure you would have to throw me to the fishes. Bah! that's over, at all events. You did take good care of me, Dr. Woods—I am not ungrateful for that.

(*They walk up and down the deck slowly*).

Dr. W.—For Heaven's sake, don't talk to me in that formal way, and don't be afraid of giving me a chance to get in a word. I only want to say enough to give you back the confidence I know you had in me. You may think me an old fogey, and I must confess to being three-and-thirty—a long way ahead of seventeen, it's true.

Miss F. (*pouting slightly*).—Nearly eighteen, I said.

Dr. W.—Well, eighteen if you like—you know you think me quite middle-aged, anyhow; and indeed, I begin to feel so to-day, now that I know—what you told me last night. But you may be sure I shall never torment or worry you again. Only trust me—give me back my right to scold you when you are imprudent—yes, you are often, about your health—tease and chaff me as you used to. And believe me—you do believe me? —that I had not the very faintest notion you were engaged to be married, or I should never——

Miss F.—I do believe that; and I don't suppose anyone dislikes being cared for. It is not that; but it all feels different now, and you must have thought me—well, I don't know how to say it, but it was just because I thought you knew that I felt so much at my ease with you, and talked to you and trusted you—and now you seem like someone else that I don't know yet and am not so sure of. But I daresay it will all come right again, only—(*stopping*).

Dr. W.—Only what? There is something on your mind, Miss Florence. Tell me candidly what it is. We can never be quite friends again while you hide anything from me. Scold me as much as you like; only, get it all out now, and let us start fair once more.

Miss F.—There *is* something I don't quite understand. Though it may seem a little thing, it is so unlike you that it puzzles me. Tell me honestly, why did you disturb me so late and begin all this at that time of night, and while I am still weak and ill? Do you think it was quite fair and considerate under the circumstances?

Dr. W.—Heavens! I never thought it would look like that. When I came to your cabin last night I was terribly excited and anxious, but I never for one moment intended to speak about myself; the impulse to tell you what I had long felt came upon me quite suddenly—I had begun before I knew what I was doing. But I swear to you I did not come then for any selfish reason; I——

Miss F.—Dr. Woods, it is you who are not being candid now. If this was so, why on earth should you have come at eleven o'clock—you never came after nine till last night? I wish you had not, but I could forgive it better if you acknowledge that it was wrong of you.

Dr. W. (*beginning in an offended tone, which gradually becomes passionate and excited*).—You are very hard upon me, Miss Florence, and I think this is the first time anyone has ever doubted my word. But since you force me to speak, I will tell you myself what you are sure to hear from the Captain and others in a few minutes. It is true that the fog lifted suddenly last night, and when it did they found that the ship was in the utmost peril. We had lost our bearings and were driving towards land; the breakers were close ahead; the wind setting strong ashore. There was not a moment to be lost—if she did not go about we must be on the rocks. Once, twice, she missed stays; the suspense was maddening. I could stand it no longer. I knew if she missed once more she must strike. I knew what a small chance you would have in your weakness when the rush to the boats came; and I determined, come what would, to save your life if that were possible. Then, when I saw your face, and thought that the next minute it might be all up with us—oh! how could I hold my tongue, how could I help yearning for one word of tenderness from you? This is why I came, why I spoke so madly, why I——

Miss F. (*with streaming eyes and holding out both hands to him*)—O Doctor! can you ever forgive me? Now I understand.

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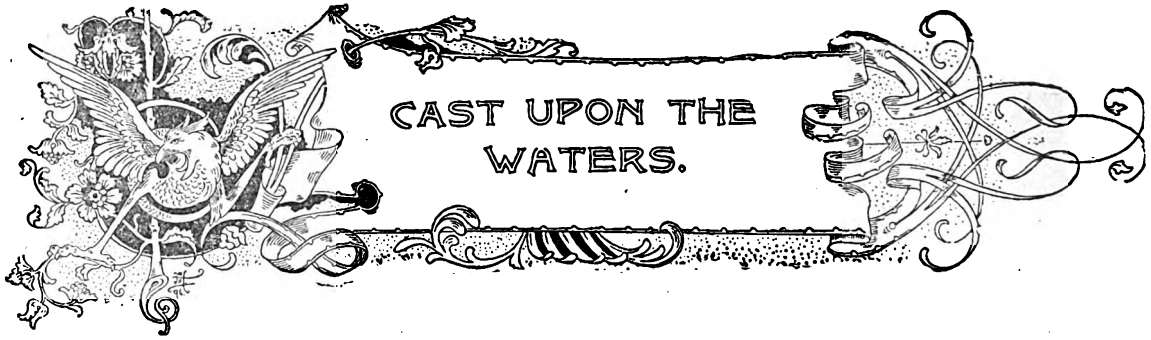
James Philips.



THE news came to Howland Starforth by letter and newspapers, that John Maze, the millionaire, had died and left two hundred thousand pounds to him by his will.

People talked it over and believed the will couldn't be upset, though contested by rich relatives who were sorry to see so much money go out of the family, and said Maze was mad.

Starforth was surrounded by congratulators, however, on the very morning when the news came. He was down among the dregs in the very lowest sedimental depths of poverty. He had lain abed in his last remaining shirt till eleven o'clock, because he could not afford a breakfast, and when he had fastened his rags about him with some borrowed pins, he had gone into a grocer's shop to negotiate credit for bread and cheese enough to keep him going for that day. And there he received three letters, seven newspapers were thrust under his nose, and eleven men crowded eagerly about him, and all coincided in the astounding tidings—in fact, they jostled him so that he had to retreat behind a hogshead of sugar, for fear the rags would get unpinned.

"Gentlemen," said Howland, "don't crowd. To be sure, I've been a poor man for twenty years, and am used to being crowded; but you forget that I am now a rich man; and the feelings of my clothes, if not me, are tender, and unless you wish me to begin being rich in an unbecoming fashion, I say, don't crowd."

"But we are so glad of your good luck."

"Ah!" said Starforth, with a dry snuff; "let me see; I have suffered poverty for twenty years—disappointments, ill-paid industry—been shabby and shunned—my sympathy for the poor classing me as the companion of wretches—and my only crimes to merit this long distress were my generosity, ill-luck, and lack of business tact. And now, when chance makes me lucky, you are glad. Well, I believe you—and I am glad, too."

All offered to do anything to prove it.

"Then give me," said he, to one who offered credit, "a suit of clothes and a beefsteak, first thing!"

They were furnished directly, and with these he commenced life as a rich man, turning his back on rags and bread and cheese for ever.

Starforth had once lived in the same town with Maze, who had learnt his history, been charmed with his many acts of disinterested benevolence towards wretches even more distressed than he, and in a moment of misanthropy for all the world beside, had determined thus to reward him.

Day after day now letters poured in upon Starforth from lawyers, offering their services to support his claim. Some said it was precarious unless defended; others, that it was sure at any rate, but a timely champion would get it acknowledged sooner; some offered money for his present known need, if they were engaged; others sent it, to make sure; some mentioned terms for the job; others asked what he would give; others made pay contingent on success.

Then came letters by the score from private persons; offers of credit from tradesmen; offers of money from brokers, at a stated rate of interest; offers of partnership from firms, now in need, but which had crushed him when down; reminders of small loans and bills unpaid, hoping he would not forget when in possession; hopes that his good fortune would not make him irreligious or intemperate; petitions for patronage and charity saying, "You were poor once yourself," and a hundred and fifty plans, of speculations, in which he was invited to join and share the immense profits—and so on.

But he noticed one circumstance—that of all who had befriended him in an unselfish manner, though many congratulated and some had grown poor, not one asked assistance—for their pure generosity was sensitive, and recoiled from the idea that they might have expected an equivalent.

The last was from one who had lent him two shillings twenty years before:

"Which," said the writer, "at six per cent., simple interest, would now amount to about double. You may make it compound, if you please—but as it is uncertain whether you will pay at all, I can't spare time now to figure up what it would then be. Time is money."

Starforth was naturally, or through misfortune, eccentric, and he advertised an answer to all—a general one—in the course of which he said to the lawyers:

"I shall employ no advocate, but let fortune take her course. She has had her own way with me so long, that now she smiles I dare not presume to interfere, lest she withdraw them."

"Confound the fellow!" cried the whole legal chorus, "the legatee is as mad as the legator."

The rosy dawn of Howland Starforth's credit had not lasted more than a week, when one day, as he was airing his new suit in a park, he was approached by an elderly man in a suit almost as tattered as that which so lately had cost him so much trouble to pin.

Starforth recognised the person at once. It was James Plummet. He greeted him cordially, and showed him several letters in proof of his prospects. Plummet had once been able to assist him, and had done so most generously, but was now evidently poor. He read the letters and looked greatly pleased; but though he seemed dropping to pieces, he asked for no assistance to defer the period of dissolution.

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Starforth was moved by grateful memory, and more by the man's conduct and appearance.

"I see how it is, Plummet," said he, cheeringly. "You are down now. I don't forget when I was. Here I have letters and have had other offers, from a pack of selfish speculators in chances, who will furnish me with abundant pecuniary and other aid, to be paid for at double price when I get my money, and to be accounted gratuitous if I don't get it. Come with me. I think it is safe to accept, for I shall not feel it in either event."

So he provided Plummet with an ample wardrobe, a sum of money, and, by virtue of his new-born influence, helped him into a lucrative situation, and at parting he gave him a written bond.

"Here," said he, "is something in memory of former kindness. If the condition is fulfilled, it will be a fortune to you, and only a drop in the bucket to me. You cast your bread on the waters; it has returned to bless you on dry land."

This was a promissory note for one thousand pounds, payable when Starforth should get possession of his money.

And now it was that Starforth, with plenty of rich apparel and money advanced on the above-mentioned terms, suffered himself to be taken under the wing of a fashionable popinjay, one Augustus Fitzleech, and put through a course of lionization.

Fitzleech was a toy of a man—an essence bottle, "Not to know him argued yourself unknown" in fashionable eddies—as common as a butterfly, as flimsy, gay, and gaudy. Like other flies, he had the entrée everywhere, and by him Starforth was proudly introduced to the social circles of people of money, fashion, rank, learning, and genius.

He received the welcoming smiles of all, and, as he was a single man, especially of bowing fathers and courtesying mothers who had misses capable of marriage.

It was quite a treat to Starforth who had been a man of sorrow for so long. He felt as hilarious at this new phase of his life as a successful debutant upon the stage, or a mouse which has at last gnawed its way to the right side of a cheese box. But his pride was not excited a whit—it was his mirth, his curiosity. He revelled in the obsequiousness and adulation which he knew how to appraise, and reflected servile civility with a politeness as sincere, or a humility more genuine.

"Pray tell me, dear Mr. Starforth who is your tailor? I must know him. Such an admirable coat—or else it is you who become it is well!"

"Nature, sir, is my regular tailor; but for the past twenty years rags were so abundant that I depended a good deal on art, and had more tails than I could count."

"Don't, for Heaven's sake!" whispered the horrified Fitzleech.

"I favour immensely the exquisite symmetry of your style of boots, Mr. Starforth. Do you get them from Paris yourself, or through a London firm?"

"I really couldn't swear where they came from, but they make me growl at the corns they give me, every time I put them on. You see, sir, my feet have spread all out of shape, owing to a compulsory habit of wearing old cast-off shoes, or going barefoot."

"Are you gone crazy? Please desist!" implored Fitzleech.

"In confidence, friend Starforth, who is your shirt-maker? I frankly admit I affect that style of front very much."

"It is the only front I have had for years which *wasn't* affected, sir, either by age or wear. I was so glad to get this that I forgot to inquire who built the establishment."

His ludicrous replies referring to past poverty, and his graver comments showing utter indifference to whimsical respectability, set his lioniser upon the rack, and Fitzleech gave him up. He departed from the conventional atmosphere with a very unconventional chuckle, leaving behind him the reputation of being either an eccentric genius, or crazed by sudden fortune or long misfortune.

But this summer-time of his expectancy was short, and was not followed even by a compromising autumn, for freezing winter of disappointment set in abruptly.

The will of old Maze had been contested in court, and was upset. It was decided that the testator was mad when he made it, and had left such an enormous sum to Starforth only through a freak of insane benevolence; and so the property all went to one of his relatives.

Howland Starforth received the news with regret, but with an equanimity as complete as when he had heard the good news.

The host of human butterflies all speedily vanished, of course, and he was glad of it; while those who had assisted him on speculation, despite the terms agreed upon, urgently expressed their "hopes that he would work out what they had advanced."

But this to him was no new insight into the world's selfishness. He had often dreamed a pleasant dream before—and woke to hunger and misusage!

With beggars he had often divided his last shilling; by beggars on horseback he had as often been spattered with the mire of contempt.

"World—frothing, glittering, remorseless, treacherous wave, I know you," murmured he, as he took his customary morning saunter through the park, "but I fear you not, for I have learnt how to swim."

He halted and looked heavenward.

"What are you looking at?" said a voice close by.

He diverted his gaze, and saw Plummet.

"I was looking for a situation," said Starforth, with a significant smile; "but I suppose my old ill luck will attend me."

"What! A man worth two hundred thousand pounds, and want to die?"

"All is lost," replied Starforth; "but, thank goodness, I did some good while I had a chance. Next to my money, however, I am sorry you have lost a thousand pounds."

"Not exactly," said Plummet, with an astonishing degree of illumination in his face. "I have to inform you that I was the nearest living relative of Maze, and was your chief rival expectant of the property. When I saw you last, I was not in reality poor, but came to you, so seemingly, resolved to sound you, and if I succeeded to the inheritance, to do precisely as much for you as your gratitude and sympathy did for me. I found you true metal in your hour of fancied prosperity; you shall find me so in the real one. You lost, I won. There is my cheque for one thousand pounds."

"Can this be reality?" exclaimed Starforth, staring at the cheque, which he held with trembling hand.

"It is indeed," answered Plummet; "and to use your own words, 'it will be a fortune to you, and only a drop in the bucket to me.' You cast your bread upon the waters; it has returned to bless you on dry land!"

The cheque was honoured, and the benevolent child of misfortune has enough to last till he dies.

J. PIGSTRAW.

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THE MINER'S LOVE.

ONE September morning, while the sun was shining down in the Australian mining town of Walong, Ellen and her father came slowly along the road.

Over in Gilt Creek a great strike had occurred, and numbers of prospectors thronged the streets, and stood in groups at every corner. One rough miner turned and looked after Ellen and her father and the old hand-organ.

"This 'ere's a city now, boys!" he cried. "Just look at the organ-grinder come to town."

"Give me a tune, old man!" called out a second miner.

"Let him alone, boys," said a third. "He is blind."

Ellen led her father down the narrow street, and piloted him safely through the noisy crowd. As she turned a corner she spied an unpretending eating-house.

"Dinner 1s. 6d.," the sign read; and she paused before the open door.

"We'll go in and git some dinner, dad. I'm fearful hungry."

She led her father to one of the small tables, and slipped the organ from his back. Then she drew an old red handkerchief from her pocket and untied one corner. A little roll of coins dropped out on to the table.

"Got enough, dear?" asked her father. His quick ear had caught the click of the coins.

"Lots," said she shortly.

She hastily tied up the money, and going to the counter ordered dinner for her father, and for herself—only a bowl of oatmeal and milk.

"I was pretty near starved," said the old organ-grinder, as he ate his roast beef with a good relish. "Hain't the meat good, Ellen?"

"Course it is!" answered Ellen calmly, taking a sip of milk.

"And the tomatoes and the rice puddin'?" added her father.

"Yes, dad; but don't stop to talk," said his daughter.

She soon finished her own simple dinner, and leant back in the stiff wooden chair. Two miners close by looked up admiringly. Her eyes were large and black, as had been those of her Italian mother, who had died when she was born. Heavy braids of black hair were wound round her head, and her cheeks and lips were crimson. Her old straw hat was tied down with a faded ribbon; her dark blue dress was stained and shabby. She wore a blanket shawl round her slender shoulders.

"We've had a splendid dinner, hain't we?" said her father, rising and taking the organ on his back.

The young woman took her father's arm and led him to the corner of the street.

"We'll stop and play here, dad."

Her father patiently began to turn the crank of the old organ. She stood beside him, and eagerly scanned the faces of the passers-by. Few seemed to think the music was worth paying for. A lady gave a coin, and a miner carelessly tossed a sixpence towards them.

But their supper and a night's lodging were to be paid for, and very little was left in the handkerchief.

It grew late at last. The organ-grinder had played through all his tunes.

"You are tired, dad," said Ellen, as her father paused "We'll go and find a place to sleep."

"We don't want no supper, do we, Nell? We had such a hearty dinner.'

"Yes, dad," said she faintly.

"And it was late, too," added the old man. "It must ha' been 'most three o'clock."

"Be you hungry, dad?" asked the daughter, anxiously looking into his face.

"Not a mite," answered her father, very cheerfully. "And s'pose I play a little longer? 'Tain't dark yet, is it? Let's walk along."

They turned a corner, and found themselves in a side street in a quiet neighbourhood. There were curtains at some of the small cabins

An open door gave a glimpse of a bright Brussels carpet. Suddenly a young girl appeared at a window, and raising the sash, very carelessly tossed out into the road a beautiful, half-withered bouquet of hothouse flowers.

Ellen quickly glanced up at the lady, who was young and had fair hair. This much she remembered always.

The bouquet rolled to the young girl's feet, then stopped. She stooped and picked up the flowers. They were only a little faded! some of the roses were quite fresh and fragrant. It must have been a beautiful bouquet once. Why did the young lady throw it away so soon?

It was nearly seven o'clock. Ellen and her father had paused before a large hotel; the space in front was crowded with men. Some of them gazed at the girl who stood so patiently beside the old organ. Her hat had slipped back, and her black hair lay in rings on her smooth, white forehead.

She did not know how pretty she was, and wondered why the men stared at her so. She knew she was tired and hungry. She wished someone would toss them some money.

A young man came down the steps. He wore a blue flannel shirt, and his coat was quite as shabby as the one her father wore. He stood in front of the organ with his hands in his pockets. For a few moments he did not speak, but seemed to be listening to the music. And then his eye fell on the flowers.

"Where'd you git 'em?" he asked suddenly.

"Found 'em," answered the girl quite as shortly.

He came a step nearer and held out his hand.

"Let me see 'em." She drew back hastily.

"Pay for 'em first. I'll sell 'em cheap," she said.

He thrust his hand still deeper in his pocket, then tossed some silver on the top of the old organ. Then he took the flowers and studied them intently as he turned the bouquet round.

"Tell me where you got 'em," he asked pleadingly.

"Found 'em," she said again. "A lady throwed 'em out the winder."

The young man said something under his breath, then turned and walked away.

Ellen had seen the colour come to his face and a hurt look in his eyes. As she looked after him he gave the bouquet a toss and it fell in the muddy street, only to be crushed the next instant by the wheels of a passing vehicle.

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"Hain't there enough money yet?" asked her father, touching her arm.

"Yes, dad," she answered. "We'll go and get some supper, and then we'll find a place to sleep."

The little parlour of Mrs. Murphy's lodging-house was crowded with miners that evening. Ellen left her father seated contentedly in a corner, and stole quietly out of the front door. She was so used to an outdoor life that she felt suffocated in a small and close room.

Some one sat on the lower step, with his head resting on his hands. He looked up and saw her as she stood hesitatingly in the doorway.

"Don't be afraid," he said kindly.

It was the young man who had bought the flowers.

She sank down on the steps, and drew her old shawl still closer about her.

"It's cold out here," said the young man. "Perhaps you'd better go in."

"I ain't cold," answered Ellen; "I'm most always outdoors."

"Where'd you say you found the posies?" he asked, suddenly raising his head.

"A young lady throwed 'em out; she had yeller hair. It was a house with white curtains at the winders. I didn't set no price on the flowers," she added hastily; "you needn't have paid so much for 'em."

"I ain't complainin' of the price," said the young fellow. "They cost me a pile to begin with."

"Did you give 'em to her?" she asked curiously.

"Yes," he answered shortly; "more fool, too!"

"They were faded," remarked the girl consolingly.

"Yes," he said bitterly. "She had 'em twelve hours."

His head dropped on his hands again.

"I wouldn't care," said Ellen softly.

The young man glanced at her. Her eyes were soft with sympathy; she looked so fair in the moonlight.

"How old are you?" he asked abruptly.

"Seventeen," she replied wonderingly.

"And you travel about with your father?"

"Yes," said the girl. "Dad likes to travel. He won't let me do nothin'," she replied proudly. "He says he can support me."

"Can you write?" looking eagerly into her pretty face.

"Yes. I was at school once."

"I hain't got no edication," said the young man sadly, "and I want to get a letter writ."

"I'll do it," she offered eagerly.

"Will you, now?" and the young fellow sprang up. "Come on into the kitchen. There's never nobody there."

In a few moments he had brought her a sheet of paper and pen and ink.

They were alone in the little kitchen that was scarcely more than a shed, and the girl seated herself at the pine table.

"Begin 'Darlin' Lizzie,'" said the young man, leaning anxiously over her shoulder.

In a cramped hand and very slowly she wrote: "Darling Lizzie."

"Tell her I love her!" he burst out. "Tell her I'm going over to Red Mountain to-morrow, but she can write to me. Jim Conroy'll read me her letter. She needn't say nothin' but yes or no. Got it all down?"

"Pretty near," said the girl. "You told me such an awful lot."

She was handling the pen awkwardly.

A bright colour had come to the young man's cheeks. His hair was light, almost golden, just the colour of the young lady's, Ellen thought. She glanced down at the letter. Would "Darling Lizzie" say yes or no?

"Done?" said her new friend. "I'll take it over to the Post-office."

He sealed the envelope carefully and put it tenderly in his pocket. Then he held out his bronzed hand.

"Good-bye, I'm much obliged to you. If I don't never see you again, I wish you good luck."

As he passed her chair a half-sovereign dropped into her lap.

The next September Ellen and her father found themselves once more crossing Red Mountain on their way to Walong. She had grown a little taller, but she looked much the same. Her dress was still shabby, and a forlorn felt hat replaced the old black straw. But her lips and cheeks were crimson with exercise and health. As they came into view of the town, they passed a group of miners who were out prospecting. One of them shaded his eyes with his hands and looked long at Ellen.

"Give us a tune!" he called out to the organ-grinder, and the old man obediently set down his organ and began to turn the crank.

Then the young miner came slowly towards the girl and held out his hand. The girl knew him at a glance, and her black eyes grew bright with pleasure.

"I didn't get no answer," he whispered.

Ellen looked sorry; then a curious gladness came to her eyes.

"Haven't you seen her?" she asked.

"No," answered the young man; "she don't live here no more."

"I'm sorry," said the girl; "I writ it plain."

"'Twasn't your fault."

Then he looked at her admiringly.

"S'pose I come to see you to-night?"

The old organ-grinder took up his burden again, and as they moved away she smiled over her shoulder at the young man with fair hair who looked after her as he leant lightly on his pick.

A month later a clergyman at Walong married them.

Ellen was very happy in her new home. There were no lace curtains at the cabin windows, for her husband was but a poor prospector, with only his youth and hope. Her father still played the old organ, but he kept near home that Ellen might see him as she glanced up from her work.

One evening during the winter her husband came home, and as he seated himself by the stove drew a yellow envelope from his pocket. It was old and worn by much handling, and bore numerous postmarks.

"What is it?" asked Ellen quickly.

"An old letter fur me," answered her husband. "They said it had bin follerin' me 'round everywhere. I hain't been in one place long the past year. It ain't much good now. S'pose you read it."

She took the letter and tore open the envelope. There were only a few lines.

It began "Darlin' Jim," and was signed "Your own Lizzie." It stated that the writer would marry him at any time.

"Don't look so!" cried her husband, as Ellen grew deadly white. She did not speak, but stood perfectly still with the letter clutched in her hand.

But her husband threw his strong arms around her.

"I'm glad I didn't get it!" he cried. "Don't you know I love you best? Nobody can't take your place now."

May Goodenough.

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FROM PRAIRIE AND BACKWOODS.

XII.—BLACK JOHNSON, THE SCOUT.

TEXAS was my home in my early days, and at the time I am writing about I was engaged, in connection with an old friend, in stocking a sheep farm in Harrison County.

I was on my way West to purchase a large flock of an old Mexican settler. I journeyed along pleasantly enough till, on reaching a settlement on the Upper Brazos, I was somewhat disturbed by the report of a hunting party of Kioways, who had followed the buffaloes into the range through which my trail would lead me.

It was then that I was forcibly reminded of stories I had heard of the prowess of a famous hunter called Black Johnson, who had often wiped out scores of enemies, single-handed, and who was the most terrible man in all that region of terrible men.

It occurred to me that just then would be a good time to fall in with Black Johnson, and have him for a travelling companion. But I had to push on alone.

I had passed the buffalo range in safety, and there was not an Indian, I supposed, within leagues of me, when one evening, being encamped on the narrow strip of timber skirting a small spring brook, my horse broke from his tether, and escaped from me into the open prairie. This made it necessary for me to leave my shelter in pursuit of him.

I hadn't gone far when I heard a distant whoop, and, scanning the wide plain, perceived five horsemen riding at a fast gallop towards me, and was startled at the discovery of their being Indians.

I lost no time in reaching the spot where I had left my rifle and pistols, and immediately proceeded to take such hasty measures for defence as I could.

Where I had made my bivouac the stream formed a small curve, and ran deep between its banks. I instantly availed myself of this fortunate lay of the ground, and, snatching up my weapons, took my position behind the bank, which reached above my breast, and awaited the approach of the savages.

It was not long before they were upon me. But ere they had discovered my position I had levelled my trusty rifle, and dropped the foremost Indian from his saddle. Seeing this, the other painted imps, letting fly a volley of arrows, dismounted from their beasts, and filling the little grove with mad yells, charged upon me.

I had now nothing but my two single-barrelled pistols remaining, and no time to reload my rifle. But as the savages rushed towards me I gave them a shot from one of my pistols, and snatching up my rifle again, as if it contained a charge, levelled it at them.

This ruse checked them, and they sought the cover of the small growth, from which they directed their guns upon my shelter, waiting only for a sight of my head to fire.

Twice I drew their shots by the old artifice, I had somewhere read of, namely, raising my hat upon the end of my rifle. But the cunning savages soon detected the cheat, and pressed closer and closer upon me.

They were extremely wary in their movements, and careful not to expose any part of their painted carcasses to my aim. It was at this point of the fight that I withdrew my empty rifle, and was hastily charging it, while my empty pistol was deposited at hand upon the bank, when I heard a cautious and stealthy tread along the bottom of the brook in my rear.

So startled was I at this unexpected addition to my enemies, that in my agitation I let the powder fall from the palm of my hand to the ground. I knew that four Indians were still in front of me in the thicket, for they could not have reached the stream unperceived by me.

Nearer and quicker approached the steps behind me, and I was now about to leap upon the bank, and, giving all up for lost, throw myself upon the fire of the savages in front.

I had sprung upon a decayed log for that purpose, when a powerful grasp was laid upon my shoulder, and I was borne to the ground.

Before I could perceive my new assailant a voice whispered in my ear:

"Keep down, stranger, or them varmints'll make daylight shine through yer brain pan. I reckon you and I'll be good for them red rascals."

And before I could recover from this sudden surprise the new-comer raised a long double-barrelled rifle, and fired twice in quick succession, and I knew from the yells of mingled rage and pain that followed that each shot had taken effect.

The next instant the stranger leapt past me up the bank, and was engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the remaining two savages. He made short work of it, for before I could reach the spot he had them at his feet.

"Are there any more of the varmints about?" inquired my rescuer. "Here's one, two, three, four, five on 'em; is that all?"

"Yes," said I, "there were but five of them. And now, my friend, I must thank you for your timely aid, without which, I am sure, I should not be among the living."

"What would you thank me for, stranger? Why, it's my bis'ness to upset the red varmints. I've followed it all my life, and I reckon I'd rather do it than eat, any time. They wiped out my poor father and my only sister, and I owes 'em a grudge it'll take a lot to satisfy.

"I seed the varmints making a dash for the bottom here, and I knowed they wan't arter no good. I reckoned they'd scented you out—for I diskivered yer trail two days ago—and I knowed a lone traveller'd be sure to draw the varmints out, and so I followed arter yer."

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I had now leisure to take a survey of my preserver. He was a singular-looking individual, about middle-aged, with a tall, muscular person, which was clothed in a well-greased and shiny suit of buckskin that had evidently seen much rough service. About his waist was a broad leathern belt, in which were a couple of heavy cavalry pistols, a keen, long-handled hatchet, and the scabbard of a heavy bowie-knife. These, with his long two-barrelled rifle, constituted a very efficient armament for one person to carry continually about him.

To one unaccustomed to them they would prove a rather heavy burden; but the stranger appeared not the least incommoded by them, and moved with all the lightness and grace of a young Indian warrior beneath his quiver of arrows.

In place of a hat the stranger wore on his head a sort of turban, made from folds of a piece of figured calico, which, confining his sandy locks upon the top of his head, brought his bold and rather handsome features into strong relief. But the most attractive feature about his face was a pair of large, prominent grey eyes that seemed to take in every object about him at a glance.

Such was the appearance of this man, as with one foot resting upon the breast of the savage he had last scalped he was leisurely recharging his weapons.

"I reckon, stranger," commenced my new companion, as he returned the last pistol to his belt, "yer'd better gather up yer traps and jine me at my camp to-night; and in the morning we can ride in company—that is to say, as if 'twould be agreeable to you."

I assured him that nothing would give me greater satisfaction.

"But," said I, "perhaps our trails don't run in the same direction."

"Where might yer be bound?"

"To the Spanish colony," I answered.

"Ah, that's fortunate! My trail runs through the same settlement. So we'll catch that runaway nag of yourn, and put out to my camp. It's but a little way from here in this same creek bottom."

In another half-hour we had arrived at his camp, and, after a relishing supper of "hump" and marrow bones, I spread my blanket, and was soon forgetful of the exciting incident of the day.

Whether my companion slept or not I cannot say, for when I awoke at dawn he was already about, having changed the feeding place of the horses, and prepared a fragrant roast of buffalo flesh for an early breakfast.

Partaking of the repast, we were soon on our way to the Leon, the belts of timber which skirted the river being plainly visible from the swells of the prairie as we rode along.

I found my fellow-traveller, though not very loquacious, a very sensible and pleasant companion. He was familiar with every foot of the ground over which we travelled, and said that he had camped on every watercourse river and spring branch between the Red River of Louisiana and Mexico. But in all his conversation he never used an egotistical remark. His modesty was remarkable, and beyond what he said of killing Indians after the skirmish at my camp, he made no reference to his ever before being engaged in a fight.

The sun had scarcely passed the meridian when we came in sight of the settlement of the old Spanish colony, and my companion pointed out to me, in the edge of the river bottom, the thatched roofed rancho of Don Pancho Diego, the Mexican with whom I had contracted for a thousand head of yearling ewes. Soon we had passed the extensive corrals, in which large flocks of sheep were nightly driven, and rode up to the low porch of the Mexican's dwelling. No persons were moving about, and it was evident the occupants were enjoying their post-prandial siesta.

"Good-evening, friends!" shouted my companion; and his voice aroused a pack of shaggy shepherd dogs, who, gathering from the numerous outbuildings, quickly called the peons and the master to the door.

"Down, down, dogs!" cried an old leather-clad Mexican, as he kicked the noisy animals from his path, and approached us, still rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Ah, it is you, my good friend, Don Thomas?" said the old man, grasping the hand of my companion, who had not yet dismounted, covering it with kisses, and expressing the utmost delight at seeing him.

While the Mexican still clung to the Texan's hand an old matron rushed from the house, and with a cry of unbounded joy seized upon my friend's other hand, and hugging his leg, gave vent to the most extravagant expressions of satisfaction.

Nor were they satisfied with this demonstrative welcome, for when the Texan at length released himself from their embraces long enough to dismount, they again renewed the charge, and throwing themselves upon his neck, almost smothered him with their warm salutes.

After these transports were over, the Texan introduced me to the Mexican, and informed him that I was the Harrison County gentleman who had been in correspondence with him in relation to purchasing a flock of sheep. I also received a kindly welcome, and peons taking our animals, we were led into the house.

"Ah, Don Thomas!" exclaimed the old lady, after we had been seated, "we are so happy to see you again."

And then both she and her husband speaking together, commenced a long story, how the Texan had saved their lives a few years before, when their ranche had been attacked by a thieving band of Comanches.

According to their account, he, with a small party of rangers, had performed wonders of valour, for, coming upon the settlement after the savages had already set fire to many of the ranches, he attacked more than ten times his own numbers, and slaying more than half of them, saved the lives of the entire settlement, since which the Indians had not ventured to return.

During this recital I observed my companion sat uneasily in his chair, and seemed impatient of his own praises.

"Tut, tut, my good friends, you lay it on too thick!" said he, as they concluded their earnest talk. "Yer see, stranger, I and some of the boys happened along here a few years ago when we discovered a party of red-skins plundering the ranches, and what could we do but drive 'em off? That's all. To be sure, it was a pretty warm fight, and some of the boys got hurt, but after all 'twa'n't nothing to brag on."

"And he saved my life yesterday," said I to the Mexicans; and then I repeated the occurrence of the previous day, adding that I had not even yet heard the name of my preserver.

"You cannot have been long in Texas," said Don Pancho, "if you have not heard the name of Thomas Johnson, usually called Black Johnson. Then let me introduce you, gentlemen."

"Black Johnson," I repeated. "Oh, yes; I have indeed heard his name before." And then came freshly to mind the anecdotes I had heard of this brave Texan.

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STORYETTES.

We shall in future devote two pages of *Short Stories* to short, humourous stories, similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette during each week, and a copy of Mr. George Griffith's novel, "Valdar the Oftborn," to each of the next best five. In the course of time we shall particularise these stories, that is to say, one week we shall ask for Anecdotes relating to Cricket, and another week Anecdotes relating to Bicycling. At present, however, jokes of any sort will do. All attempts for this week's prize must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by Monday, June 19th. *Post-cards only, please.*

She Favoured the Queen.

Two sisters while visiting in Ireland last summer got into conversation one day with a tenant of their hostess.

One of the girls, who is quite stout, had talked with this same tenant before, and this time she asked the old Irish woman if she would have known them for sisters.

"Well," was the answer, with a smile that would have put the blarney-stone itself to blush, "ye look alike; but yer sister's slender, while you, miss—well, you favour the Quane."

The Art of Letter Writing.

A mother sent her small boy into the country, and after a week of anxiety has received this letter:

"I got here all right, and forgot to write before; it is a very nice place to have fun. A fellow and I went out in a boat, and the boat tipped over, and a man got me out, and I was so full of water didn't know nothing for a long while. The other boy is got to be buried, after they find him. His mother came down and she cries all the time. A horse kicked me over, and I have some money to pay a doctor for curing my head. We are going to set an old barn on fire to-night, and I expect we shall have fun. I lost my watch, and I'm very sorry."

Marriage Out West.

"If there is any person present," said the minister, with due solemnity, "who knows of just cause or impediment why this woman should not be married to this man, let him speak now, or for ever after hold his peace."

"I don't think anybody will put in any objections, parson," said the stalwart young Arizona bridegroom, Mr. Roundup, as he laid his hand casually on the butt of his revolver, and looked carelessly round the room. "The only impediment I know of was a young feller by the name of Lariat, and I cleaned him out yesterday. And now, if you will go ahead, parson, and finish up this job, Miss Kactus and me are waiting."

A Poor Estate.

Some years ago a widow died intestate, leaving an infant girl. Subsequently a legal friend was appointed administrator of the widow's estate and guardian of her infant. A few days after the performance of the preliminary obligations he called and asked to be released from the duties of administrator.

"Nonsense," said the official, "the estate must be small, and the child is gentle and tractable. There is no reason whatever why you should worry yourself."

"Yes, there is. I can't administer this estate; there is not any need for it, and it seems cruel."

"Cruel! What do you mean? What does the estate consist of?"

"A bottle of castor-oil," answered the administrator.

A Pity To Waste It.

A young man having entertained a tender passion for a young woman, felt such insurmountable diffidence as to prevent his ever disclosing the fact to the fair empress of his heart, and resolved on an expedient which would bring the business to an issue.

He went to a clergyman and requested that the banns of marriage might be published according to law. When the publication was brought to her ears, she was filled with astonishment, and went to him to vent her resentment. He bore the sally with fortitude, observing that if she did not think proper to have him, she could go to the clergyman and forbid the banns. After a moment's pause, she said:

"Well, as it has been done, it is a pity that the shilling should be thrown away."

What Came of a Bad "Fist."

The late Lord Essex had a quarrel with a tenant-farmer, and sent the man a written notice to quit. The yeoman, though probably quite aware of the purport of the letter, took no notice of it, but stayed on. On the Michaelmas Day following Lord Essex evicted him by force. The farmer brought an action for heavy damages, and when before the court he produced the letter. The Judge looked at it, handed it to the jury, and finally to Lord Essex.

"Read it," said the Judge.

In vain Lord Essex wrestled with it. He knew what it meant, but how to make the writing come out in just those words was more than he was capable of imagining. At length he gave it up.

"And yet you expected the plaintiff to read that spider's crawl?" demanded the barrister who was opposed to Lord Essex.

The venerable peer was dumfounded, and the jury soon gave a verdict against him.

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Good Use for a Wooden Leg.

A BORDER farmer, whose practical mind soared above a taste for things beautiful, had the good or bad fortune to marry a wife who brought with her a wooden substitute for one of her nether limbs.

On being remonstrated with on the exercise of his choice, John answered his questioner in a manner that showed he had the shrewd utilitarian character of a Scotsman.

"Heck, sirs," says he, "it's maybe no' a verra bonnie thing to marry a woman wi' a wooden leg; but, man, she'll be awful usefu' at settin' time, when I'm puttin' doon my cabbages, neeps, and tatties. She can gang on in front an' mak' a hole wi' her stump, while I come ahint an' put in the seed."

Had to be Content with One.

A CLERGYMAN asked permission of the Bishop of St. David's to hold two livings under the prescribed value and, as he hoped it would be considered, within the prescribed distance. So he sought an interview, during which he unrolled an Ordnance map and measuring the scale of miles with a small rule he had brought with him, said:

"You see, my lord, they are within three miles as the crow flies."

The bishop put on his spectacles and followed the measurement.

"Yes," said he, "as the crow flies—I see that plainly enough; but then, you know, you are not a crow, and can't fly. By the turnpike road it is a good five miles; so I cannot permit you to hold the two livings."

A Scotch Economist.

ILLUSTRATIVE of the peculiar economy of Lord Dunsinnan, of the Scotch judicial bench, he had only one bed at Dunsinnan besides those occupied by his servants, thus to preclude the possibility of being put to the expense of entertaining visitors. It so occurred that the late George Dempster, of Dunnichen, one of the most intimate of the very few friends with whom his lordship associated, paid him a visit at Dunsinnan on one occasion, and, having tarried a little later than usual, a violent storm arose, which induced Mr. Dempster to think of remaining all night.

Dunsinnan, unwilling to admit the inhospitable arrangements of his mansion, evaded the proposition by every means possible, in the hope that the storm might abate.

At last, finding there was no likelihood of this, he sallied forth to the stable to order his friend's coach to the door, as the only effectual hint to his guest; but Dempster's coachman was not to be so caught—he positively refused to harness the horses in such a night, especially as the roads were so bad and dangerous, preferring rather to lie in the stable, if he could get no other accommodation, till daylight.

Lord Dunsinnan, thus driven to extremities, returned to his guest, and made known the dilemma in which they were placed.

"George," said he, "if you stay, you will go to bed at ten and rise at three; and then I shall get the bed after you."

Some Characteristics of Women.

A FOREIGN writer has been at pains to give a category of the points of difference between the typical women of the three leading nationalities. It is not recommended as an infallible one, but it is certainly interesting:

"A Frenchwoman loves to the end of the honeymoon, the Englishwoman her husband's whole life, the German woman for ever. The Frenchwoman takes her daughter to the ball, the Englishwoman takes her to church, the German woman gives her employment in the kitchen. The Frenchwoman has spirit and imagination, the Englishwoman has little taste, the German woman modesty. The Frenchwoman chats, the Englishwoman speaks, the German woman renders decisions. The Spanish woman kills her lover in jealousy, the Frenchwoman her rival, the German woman simply renounces, but all at some time marry someone else."

How He Got Engaged.

AN actor at the Carlo Theatre, in Vienna, has just passed away who had held a life-engagement as the monkey in pantomimes, and who was simply indispensable in such parts as required remarkable agility and suppleness.

When he was a young man, and first called on the manager to seek an engagement, he was refused with scant courtesy by that official, who was very busy, and who paid no attention to the young actor's plea that he did not know what he should do to earn his bread were employment refused him.

Sadly and silently the youth turned away, and paused at the door in deep dejection, as if he hoped the manager might reconsider his decision, but the manager made no sign, and with a melancholy sigh the actor languidly scratched his ear with his foot, as if in perplexity what to do next.

The manager burst into uncontrollable laughter at this unexpected action, and he was engaged instantly.

He was Safe Enough.

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL teacher has a class composed of a goodly number of average small boys. On a recent Sunday the lesson was upon the Babylonian captivity, and the teacher had done her best in preparing the lesson so as to attract and hold their attention. This not being always an easy matter in some of the Old Testament historical lessons, the teacher's energies were directed towards making the story life-like and realistic to her young pupils.

"Now just suppose, boys," she began, "that some army was to come here and take fathers and mothers and you yourselves prisoners, and carry you off to a strange land, and make you work as slaves, and try to make you believe in their religion instead of your own," etc.

As her vivid imagination enlarged upon the picture, she was pleased to notice that the boys looked interested, and that sundry mischievous kickings and punchings had ceased; but her satisfaction quickly ended as one patriotic urchin, amid the smiles of his comrades, exclaimed:

"Yes, mum, 'twould be rather hard lines; but there ain't a nation on earth that's big enough to do it!"

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HARDNESS OF HEART.

THE first time I saw Wetherbee was the night Mrs. Deane's baby died. There was nothing at all to be done, and the man sat between me and the dim light like some haggard impersonation of sympathy—every outline of his figure pathetically drooped. When the little face on the pillow began to grow pinched and waxen, he got up with a stifled groan and went softly out of the room.

I noticed that he steadied himself by the woodwork as he opened the door.

When I went into the kitchen a few minutes later he was sitting with his elbows on the table and his face on his hands.

And such a face!

It has haunted me ever since—will always haunt me. There are faces with an infinite capacity for suffering. Wetherbee's was one of these, I think. It was as if every capability of the man's nature had resolved itself into a receptacle for agony and was full to the brim. I hesitated when my eye fell upon him, but he motioned me to sit down. The Deanes had only two rooms, and the father and mother were better alone with the fluttering life.

The hands of the clocks were drawing near midnight. A dog in a neighbouring kennel gave one of those plaintive howls so mournfully human. A faint breath of sweet violets came from the bunch in the open window. Wetherbee got up and looked out, as if searching the dark.

"What do you call them little flowers, ma'am—them that grow close to the ground, with the sweet, sickly smell?"

"Violets—sweet vio'ets?"

"Yes, that's it. They use them a good deal for—for little children, don't they?"

The man turned and glanced towards the other room. His face had lost some of its rigid lines.

"Yes, I believe they do. ros buds and sweet violets; they are fair and delicate like little children."

The mother's voice came to us in soft cooing sobs. The sound seemed to strike my companion like some sharp physical pain. He sat down again, wiping the heavy drops from his forehead.

"Have you any children, ma'am?"

I did not understand it then, but I know now that my presence was a relief to him. It is only a sickly, short-lived grief that nurses itself. Strong simple natures, suffering keenly, follow their instinct, and their instinct is to forget.

"No, sir, I have no had children."

The man looked at me with the nearest approach to divine pity I have ever seen in any human face.

"Did they die when they were little, ma'am?"

I shook my head. "I have no children."

A shade of disappointment went over my companion's face. Then the anguish that had found an outlet in compassion returned to it. He shook his head sadly,

"Then you don't know, you don't know."

Something in the sound of his voice invited sympathy.

"You have buried a little child—more than one, perhaps?" I spoke as gently as I could.

"Yes, ma'am. I lost my baby. It wasn't exactly like other folks losing their children. I think it hurt me here." He drew his hand across his fore ead slowly.

A low heart-broken cry came to us from the other room, and the mother's voice burst into a flood of passionate tenderness. The little spark of life had gone out. The cry seemed to stab my companion; he started up with a shuddering groan, and stood like a man face to face with some terrible memory. I had risen to leave the room, but his face held me.

"In Heaven's name, what is it, sir? Can I help you?"

He sank into a chair beside the table and buried his face in his arms hopelessly.

"No, ma'am, nobody can help me. Even God has left me."

The words came back to me again and again as I robed the little form for its last narrow cradle. He came into the room at daybreak with a cluster of violets, dewy and fragrant. I laid them on the dead baby's breast and clasped the little hands over them, like two pearls. All the hard lines melted out of the man's face; it glowed with the exquisite radiance of fatherliness.

"The little thing's better off, don't you think so, ma'am? It might have grown up and broke loose from God some way."

"Yes; but God could keep it from sin as easily as he could take it's life," I answered quietly.

He raised his dark, luminous eyes quickly, with a questioning look.

"Don't you believe in God, ma'am?"

"Of course," I answered, smiling.

The man stayed near me during the funeral, making himself useful at every opportunity. There was something peculiarly gentle in his helpfulness.

I spoke to Mrs. Deane of him afterwards.

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"Wetherbee? Oh, yes, we think a great deal of Wetherbee. He has a room on this floor. He used to come in often when—when baby was alive. I never saw anyone fonder of children."

"Do you know anything of his wife?"

"Not very much. They don't live together. People say it's her fault. Wetherbee won't let anybody blame her. He says she's one of the saints. You know some men get those notions about a woman, and nothing will cure them. There's Ivson next door; he says his wife is tender-hearted because she cries whenever things don't go to suit her. A good many men are queer that way. If they have a poor wife they blame everything on themselves, and if they have a good one they take all the credit. I always felt sorry for Wetherbee. He don't seem like a drinking man."

"Does he drink?"

"Well, we heard he did, but we haven't seen any signs of it since he's lived here. Baby always went to Wetherbee. She'd put her little cheek against his, and coo in the cunningest way when he sang or talked to her. Children generally take to a quiet, mild-spoken man, you know. I never could think there was anything bad about Wetherbee."

In the autumn the Deanes moved to a house in the suburbs, and I lost sight of my new acquaintaince. But the memory of the man haunted me. I learnt that he was a cabinetmaker by trade, and worked in a shop in Peckham. I used to take him a little mending now and then, exchanging a few friendly words about his work or the weather. He always met me with his own peculiarly lonely smile. Something was evidently wearing upon him. The transparent pallor of his face struck me one morning as he carried some piece of work I had brought him to the window, and stood examining it carefully in the light.

"You are overworking yourself, Wetherbee," I said. "By-and-bye you will not be able to work at all."

He looked up quickly with a puzzled expression. I do not think the idea of sickness as connected with himself had ever occurred to him before.

"Oh, no, ma'am. I've always been a strong, healthy man."

"Perhaps you have; but you are neither strong nor healthy now. If you fall ill you must let me know."

He made no reply, but looked out of the window absently, as if my words had suggested a new train of thought to him. When I left the shop I turned to close the door. I saw him still standing with his eyes fixed meditatively, and the puzzled look deepening on his face.

The next time I chanced to be in Trent Street there was a stranger at Wetherbee's bench. I went into the shop and spoke to the proprietor.

"Wetherbee? He didn't come down this morning; been ailing for some time, I think. Got an excellent workman in his place—anything we can do for you, madam?"

The poor fellow was ill, then—ill and alone in that cheerless lodging-house. Nothing could be more drearily desolate. I went straight to the doctor's and talked it over with Esculapius, and by nightfall the invalid was lying on a coach before our sitting-room fire, his pale brown eyes wandering about the room with the dazed expression of a man who had never been taken care of in his life.

"I don't think it's anything, ma'am. I was just a trifle dizzy when I got up—as if everything gave out suddenly. I'm afraid I shan't try to get well *if* I stay here."

Esculapius looked him over critically and reported to me in the evening:

"The fellow has let go his hold on life. Sing to him now and then. Keep the room sunny and flowers on the table. Let him talk when he will and say what he will. Presently he will tell you the medicine that will cure him, if a cure is possible."

I followed these directions carefully, but my patient refused to talk. His silence grew almost oppressive. He would lie for hours with his yellowish-brown eyes fixed on the ceiling and an air of uncomplaining apathy indescribably touching. His whole manner was retrospective. There was a pitiful lack, not of hope, but of futurity, in the man's face. I grew impatient under his stillness.

"Is there no one you would like to see, Wetherbee—no friend or acquaintance for whom I can send?"

I regretted the words instantly. A painful flush went over his face, leaving it whiter than before.

"No, ma'am—nobody, that is, who would come. I have no friends, ma'am."

He closed his eyes and lay quite still. A few weeks had wrought a wonderful change in his face. It was thinner—more spiritual—as if life were receding slowly and without pain. Suddenly he raised his eyelids and sought my gaze. A feverish determination seemed to take the place of his habitual apathy.

"I want to tell you something, ma'am—I ought to have told you long ago. Sometimes I thought I would, but you seemed to have goodness to save your own soul, and some to spare for other people; and I needed it, ma'am, and I took it. I don't ask you to forgive me, but it's come to me lying here that maybe you'll not turn your back on me like the rest. I don't blame them. God made them, and it isn't likely He'd make anybody better than Himself. It stands to reason that them that want to be like Him would turn their backs on such as me. And *she* is like Him. I never saw her do a wrong thing in my life. You mustn't take anything I say as blaming *her*, ma'am. It's all been my own wickedness, and it's but right I should pay for it. Only it seems wrong that she should pay for it too; it don't seem as if God was just fair, always.

"I told you once I'd lost my baby, but I didn't tell you how it happened. I couldn't then. We never had any other children. Perhaps that was the reason he always seemed brighter and prettier to us than most babies. He was just a year old when—when—it happened, ma'am; just big enough to stand by a chair and shake his head, and talk the kind of babyish talk without words that nobody understands but fathers and mothers. He had the bravest big blue eyes, like his mother, and—you'll excuse me, ma'am, but I never talked of him to anybody before, and I see him all the time just as he looked *that* morning, settin' on the bed in his white flannel gown, kicking his little red socks off his legs, and lookin' out at me so saucy an' mischievous from under his curls.

"You said you never had any children, ma'am. It's queer how foolish people will be about things every baby does. I expect you've noticed it a good deal. If he'd lived to be a man and discovered another Australia, I couldn't have been any prouder of him than I was the morning his mother and me thought he spoke my name. I s'pose it's always the way.

"He wasn't very well one morning—just droopy and dull. I went and fetched the doctor, and he said it was

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nothing serious. He wrote a prescription, though, and said if he showed any signs of fever by midnight we might give him a powder. Little things come back very distinct sometimes. I recollect I was out of money, the guv'nor had been behind with our pay for a couple of weeks, and Janet went to the drawer and got me half-a-crown of h rs. She always did a little sewing for the neighbours. It wasn't in her to be idle.

"I don't know whether I can make you understand the rest or not, ma'am. I don't understand it myself. I never was what you'd call a drinkin' man. My father died of drink—a curse to himself and everybody else. I always thought it was that which made me hate liquor, and yet, all along, even when I was a boy, there was a longin' for it that stayed with me every minute.

"It got the better of me a few times, and when it did—you've read in the Bible of them possessed of devils?—well, it was like that, ma'am. When I went into the chemist's that night they carried in a man that had fainted in the street and gave him a glass of brandy. I smelt it and saw him drink it. All at once everything in me seemed to turn to thirst. If you had held the whole world in one hand and that little glass of reddish fiery stuff in the other, and offered me my choice, I'd have taken the drink. I wasn't a man any longer—just a terrib'e, sensele s, wild creature, ma'am. I took the money—Janet's money—out of my pocket, flew to a pub, and called for liquor. It's hard for you to believe it—it's hard for me, lookin' back through things that came afterwards.

"I don't remember much more, only wandering about like a bad dream, and staggerin' home towards morning. I think it was Janet's face that sobered me. She didn't get up when I came in—just sat still by the bed, with her eyes wide open and hard and her face was as if it was cut out of stone. The baby was asleep. It came to me then, like something that had happened a long time ago, about the fever at m dnight and the powder. I went up to the bed and laid my hand on his forehead. There wasn't any fever, ma'am. My baby—my baby was d ad."

The speaker's voice sank to a hoarse, unnatural whisper. The look I had seen on his face in he kitchen at Dean's came back, int nsified by his thinness and pallor. It was some time before he spoke again.

"I can't go over all the res , ma'am. If Janet had found fault with me, or said anything, it would have been easier, I think. But she went about as if she was frozen, as still and white as death, with a look in her eyes like the blade of a knife. When they had dressed him all in white and put him in his coffin, with them pale little flowers in his hands—violets, I think you said they called 'em—she came and stood over him and spoke to me. She said some cruel things then—not crueller than I deserved, not crueller than was true—but they're things I can't say over again, ma'am; not that I've forgotten them, or ever will, but I think you'll understand.

"Them was the last words she ever said to me. She went away after the funeral, and I've never seen her since. She'd took a vow, she said. I'm not a religious man, as you know, ma'am, and I don't exactly understand these things. I've tried to send her money a good many times, but it always comes back to me without a word.

"I think I've told you everything. I'll not blame you for washin' your hands of me. You've been very kind to me thus far, and I've hung on to your kindness a good deal. You've done it without knowing what kind of a man I was; but somehow I can't think that'll trouble you much—them ain't the things that fret us lookin' back. I've thought a good many times if you could go to her—if you could have her here instead of me—things would be nearer right. But, after all, I doubt if she'd let you do for her as you've done for me; it's not her way to be troub'esome. That's all, ma'am."

The speaker stopped abruptly, closing his eyes. There was no eager looking for my verdict any an iety he may have felt on that point being allayed by my face or forgotten in more painful thoughts.

"Have you any idea where your wife is living now?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am. She has a room in Fell Street. I think it like'y she'll go back to her people when she has something ahead."

Of course, I determined upon a reconciliation. Esculapius was willing, but not hopeful.

I found her without difficulty in a little back room on the second floor. The moment I saw her face I knew that my errand was useless. Not a strong face—I might have hoped to convince mistaken strength—but weak, bloodless, immovab'e. There was a well-thumbed Bible on the stand beside her and some unfinished needle-work on the floor. Everything was scrupulously neat.

I glanced about for a flower, an ornament, something to arouse a shadow of hope. There was no generous disorder, nothing lovely in the room. Even in the woman's dress of plain print, colour had been sacrificed to cleanliness; and the woman herself, sitt ng in the midst of this chilling accuracy, her colourless hair combed smoothly about her colourless face, had an air of melancholy rectitude repellant and touching. The work I had brought required but few directions, and when they were given I rose to go.

"Do you live alone?" I asked, my real errand growing more difficult every moment.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you not find it very lonely?"

"Yes, ma'am. I have been lonely ever since my baby died. It has pleased Heaven to bruise me."

"But have you no one left to love or care for? Grief so easily turns to love, you know."

The woman was tying up the work I had brought her. She drew the twine tight and fastened it firmly. There was not the slightest tremour in her voice when she spoke:

"Did *he* send you to me?"

"Your husband? No. He told me of you, and I came because I wished to—because I was sorry for him and you. Can I help you in any way?"

"No, ma'am."

The woman took her Bible from the stand, and read, in a slow, revere ial monotone:

"'And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath, and her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and d sallowed her not, then all her vows shall stand and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.'"

The cold *finality* of her voice went over me like a breath from an underground dungeon.

"But her husband may disallow her. After all, is it not for him to say whether her oath is binding or not?" Instinctively I grasped at any kind of slavery as less odious than that which she was under.

She had not raised her eyes and went on as if prepared for my appeal.

"'But if her husband disallowed her *on the day that he*

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heard it, then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips wherewith she bound her soul of none effect, and the Lord shall forgive her.' It's no use, ma'am. I've gone over it a good many times here by myself, and there's no way out of it. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and he knoweth no variableness. I don't know what *he* told you, ma'am, but when I sat there by my baby's bed, and saw death creepin' over its lit le face, I vowed if he had murdered it I'd turn my back on him for ever. And when I told him standing over the coffin he didn't open his lips. God put it into my heart to make the vow and he'll help me to keep it, ma'am."

Esculapius was right—the case was hopeless.

I made one last appeal, with my hand on the door:

"What if your husband were ill—suffering?"

The white-fringed eyelids quivered a little.

"It is Heaven's will."

I drew a long breath in the generous sunlight below. The atmosphere I had left clung to me like a damp mist. The air from the street blew clean and warm. A stalwart countryman was passing with an apple-cheeked girl on his arm. I noted the sprig of green in his buttonhole, and the cheap white ribbons fluttering about his companion's bashful face. The wan unhappy woman sitting up there in the sunless light of the window seemed the very ghost of renunciation—martyrdom robbed of all its fervour and glow.

"It was a case of spiritual petrifaction," I said to Esculapius. "She has experienced a change of heart—carries about a fossil in the place of the one God gave her. There is no hope, absolutely none."

I did not tell Wetherbee of my visit to his wife. If he suspected it my silence made him aware that it was fruitless. He was not able to leave his bed now, and the quiet unsatisfied face on the pillow did not make my memories of the fair-haired fanatic more kindly. Esculapius shook his head privately over the condition of my patient.

"The life-preserving forces are lying idle for lack of steam," he said, "and the rust of idleness is eating them up. In common phrase, the man is dying of a broken heart."

There was no acute physical suffering to make the invalid forget his grief. I was sometimes tempted to wish it otherwise.

He opened his strange, luminous eyes on me suddenly one evening, and beckoned me to the bedside.

"Do you think there's a Heaven, ma'am?" he whispered.

The question came to me strangely; as if some one standing in an open door should turn and ask me if there were anything without.

"I think there is an eternity where we see and are seen more clearly," I answered.

"Do you think there'll be a great gulf fixed between her and me?"

"No, Wetherbee. I believe that the gulf which has been between you on earth will be bridged."

A tremulous, uncertain peace stole over his face. I went back to the window where Esculapius was standing looking out into the rainy, cheerless dusk. He laid his hands on my shoulders, looked into my face tenderly, and repeated dreamily:

"Behold, we *know* not anything,
We only *hope* that good may fall,
Far off at last, at last to all,
And every winter turned to spring."

"Your patient will die to-night, little woman."

I stared at him helplessly. I had not realised that it could really come to that—that the man would die there alone—worse than alone. Could nothing be done? Was there nothing stronger than superstition? I took a scrap of paper from the table, and wrote hastily by the fading light: "Your husband is dying. Will you come?"

When my messenger was gone I came back to the sick-room to count the slow, monotonous hours. Outside the rain was beating pitilessly. I could see the bare, unlovely room, the pallid, grief-stricken woman fighting the battle with her terrible vow. There was no struggle here. The shadow of death was creeping over the tired face on the pillow gently.

"Them little flowers—do you think—if you'd ask her—she'd put them in my hands, ma'am?—perhaps I'd know——"

There were footsteps behind me, then a low, smothered cry, and wet garments brushed my hand. She bent over him, holding his hands, and cooing like a mother to her babe. A mild, ineffable peace came into his dying face.

"You are right, ma'am—the gulf's bridged—up here—Janet——"

The stillness of death stole through the room.

I went up to Wetherbee's wife presently, still kneeling with her head bowed on her husband's lifeless hand, and laid my hand on her hair.

It was wet with rain.

I smoothed it gently, but she did not move.

The little hard-hearted woman was dead.

JASPER FAULKNER.

MARY had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow;
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go.
Its fleece was white as snow:
But Mary's lamb has grown;
And now she'd rather walk three miles
Than face that lamb alone.

A POET writes: "I know sweet songs I cannot sing." That poet has our gratitude.

A MAN was brought up the other day charged with marrying again while his first wife, Ann, was alive. He pleaded not guilty, declaring that his first wife's existence was not proved, because Ann is an indefinite article.

CUSTOMER: "What's the charge?"

Barber: "Fourpence."

Customer: "Fourpence? Why, I thought you only charged twopence for a shave?"

Barber: "Yes, sir; but you see you have a double chin."

100,000 PRIZES,

Valued at £10,000,

ARE BEING GIVEN AWAY.

Full particulars appeared in last week's paper, and will appear again shortly.

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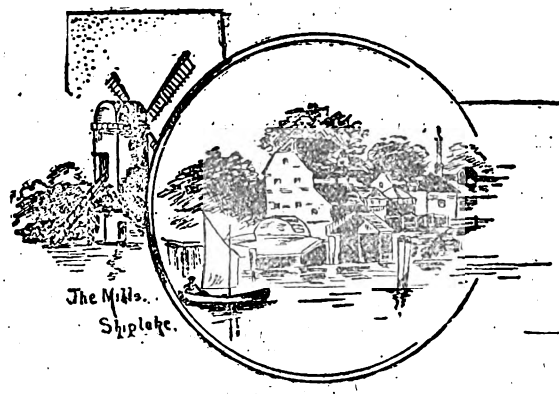

An Angel of Light.

DOT CLAVERING was just about the sunniest, daintiest morsel of humanity you ever saw, yet on this particular afternoon as she sat beside her husband watching, her little face was strangely sad and her willing fingers idle.

Dick, her husband, had found her while she was trapsing the country with a cartload of gipsies, and straightway falling in love with her, had given his birthright and much else to the "queen" in exchange for Dot's hand. The exchange, too, had been most providential, for the "merry gitanas" were in the act of training Dot to play havoc with Gentile hearts—and property. Dick's "two hundred down" had ransomed her. Dot's going had moved the "queen" to tears, since when, and her immediate marriage with Dick, she had proved herself thrice worthy of his love.

But Dick had had the misfortune of being born without a trade, and, having no rich relations to help him, had fought bravely till he could fight no longer. Thus it was, through the combined powers of want and bodily weakness, he now lay prostrate on a sick bed, with his watchful wife beside him.

The sun had slipped down the sky, and was burning its way into the horizon when Dick unclosed his eyes.

"Ah, Dot," he murmured, "still watching? I suppose our ship hasn't come home yet, eh?"

A tear dropped softly on to his hand as Dot whispered:

"No, darling, not yet."

"How much money have we left now, Dot?" he asked after a pause.

"Only your father's guinea, Dick. I'm afraid that must go to the doctor. He's a hard man, and says he won't come again unless we pay him something to-day. Yes, Dick, I'm afraid it will have to go, for I couldn't bear to lose you. Oh! my husband."

Her head fell upon his breast and she wept bitterly. Anon, Dick succeeded in quieting her, when for awhile they rested in one another's arms silently.

"There's no one we could ask to help us, is there Dick?" inquired Dot, looking up.

"None that I know of."

"Oh Dick, I don't like to ask it, but for your sake, wouldn't that lady who loved and wanted you—wouldn't she lift us out of this trouble?"

"No, Dot, no. How could I accept help from her? Besides, I don't even know where she is. It's two years since I saw her, and you forget—I wounded her so deeply."

Dot sighed, but was cut short in the act by the entrance of the doctor, who fussed into the room, fussed about the room, shook his head, pocketed the guinea, and fussed out of the room in about as little time as it takes to tell.

"There goes our very last," said Dot, referring to the guinea Dick treasured so much. "Beast!" added she, referring to the doctor.

"Hush, hush, darling!" remonstrated her husband, drawing her lovely head gently to his breast again. "Remember, even now he hasn't got his due."

"All right, Dick darling, if I mustn't say it I'll thin it."

Dick laughed; the laugh softened into a smile, and his weary eyes closed. Presently he slept.

For a few minutes Dot's longing eyes took in every quiver of his lips, and her own echoed them. For a few minutes her loving heart rocked out urgent prayers. For a few minutes she battled wildly with her grief and with the mad *abandon* her early life had begat in her. Then she arose and went to the cupboard. Not a bite or a bone!

"Poor Mother Hubbard!" she sighed, tying her bonnet strings with unnecessary vigour.

Seating herself by the bedside again, she leant over and touched her husband's forehead lightly with her lips. He made no movement, but smiled, thinking he dreamt.

"When," said Dot softly to herself, "when a man's hungry and not proud, he begs. When a woman's neither, she borrows. When a wife's broken hearted because her husband—the best unburied—wants for a crust, she steals!—steals!!"

With one more look at the sleeper, she went out and passed into the street.

* * * *

There was a great noise and hubbub, the racing of many feet, the lifting of many voices, and a great crowd. People were rushing from every direction like little needles to a vast magnet. Children were swung along on the skirts of inquisitive mothers, and squealed at their mode of locomotion. Men with tool baskets sawed their way through the eager mob, taking pieces of its apparel with them. Lifted fairly off her feet, our little Dot went with the rest, panting breathlessly as she found herself deposited on the fringe of the crowd.

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Two voices—one which Dot recognised as belonging to the doctor she called a "beast"—were raised in stern altercation.

"You stole my purse," cried the voice of the doctor.

"You liar," cried the second voice.

"I felt your hand in my pocket," cried the doctor again.

Before anything else was said, in fact, before Dot had time to realise anything, she felt a hand thrust within hers, leaving some article there, and felt her fingers pressed tightly about it.

In another moment the crowd had surged heavily, and Dot was squeezed beyond its outskirts.

She was alone, every living soul abroad being a unit in the excited mass.

Dazed, dimly conscious of something having happened, she walked swiftly away till she attained a sequestered by-street with a single lamp.

Here she stopped to recover breath, to think, and to frighten herself with foolish forbodings. Here she looked at the article so rudely forced upon her, and found it to be a purse. She opened it.

Inside was what appeared to her to be a wealth of coins and amongst them, the identical guinea she had recently given the doctor!

What should she do? To return the purse would be to place herself under suspicion, and if she were arrested what would become of Dick? "No doubt," she argued, "somebody near her was an accomplice of the actual thief. The purse, no doubt, had gone the rounds of many accomplices, and had at last come to her by mistake, being meant for the accomplice near her."

Whatever should she do?

She dared not seek the doctor and tell him all, for he was a suspicious man, and knew she disliked him.

Whatever on earth *could* she do, but go straight home to her husband and explain the affair to him? Accordingly she went, like the good little wife she was.

Dick was awake when she returned and greeted her fondly. He remarked upon her burning cheeks and excited manner, and hearing she had something to tell, prepared to listen.

Then Dot began her story, recounting everything from the time he fell asleep—telling of her struggles and intentions, and concluding with the incident of the purse, and how it belonged to that "beast of a doctor."

Dick listened, with a cloud gathering surely in his eyes. Hearing how the spirit of her early associates possessed her, he shivered; hearing how she had gone out intending to get food *somehow*, he raised himself anxiously on his elbow, watching her keenly. Then at last, when he heard how it was the doctor's purse which had been stolen, his trust in her broke away, leaving him frantic.

"Woman!" he thundered. "What have you done?"

"Dick—husband!" she cried piteously. "Don't watch me like that. How have I done wrong?"

Her look of voiceless anguish struck him as hypocrisy, and with increasing anger he cried:

"You are a thief! *You* stole this purse! Do you think I forgot your girlhood's training? Do you think I don't know that you hungered to retain that guinea even as I did? Do you think I was blind to your hatred of the doctor? Oh, false, false woman!"

She uttered no word of reply, but stood, big-eyed with agony, staring at him. She stood with hands clutching her breast as if to stay the biting of some fearful reptile. She stood for a minute like a carving in rock—sightless, dumb, lifeless. Then she swayed, twice—thrice, and fell with a moan that would have broken the heart of a hangman.

* * * * *

Recovering, she found herself alone. She noted, too, the absence of the purse, and rightly divined her husband had gone to return it.

Steadying herself by various articles in the room, she gripped the bed-rail, took a few more steps, and sank down where lately Dick had lain—her head where his had been.

Anon she arose, tied on her poor little bonnet and crept softly away, thinking the world a limitless chamber she had got into by mistake.

Within an hour, her husband returned and looked wistfully around. The sun had risen often, but it never, never rose on a sadder sight than him—kissing the spot where his head had rested, damp with little Dot's tears.

* * * * *

"Wanted—A young lady to act as amanuensis to authoress. Apply personally, etc., etc."

"Well, I don't know," sighed Dot, all alone in a very small room, "but I must do something. I can't do what other women do, I'm not strong enough. I wonder whether she would engage me? Authors, I suppose are dreadfully mad and touchy, but I can write and spell—Dick taught me."

She breathed deeply as she re-read the advertisement and trembled as she thought of applying.

"She won't eat me if I don't suit," Dot told herself, mustering enough courage to smile at her thought.

Anyway, she looked dainty enough to eat, as with every token of nervousness she approached the dispensary of wonderland and romance.

"Dick was an author once," she whispered, turning the final corner, "and got two pounds two shillings from an editor or somebody. He wrote a book which was going to make him famous once, but he lost it, or had it stolen or something. 'Such a big book,' he used to say, laughing, 'big as that house, Dot.' Oh——"

Her soliloquy was brought to a sudden stop by finding herself in front of the very house she sought.

"Oh, goodness!" she said in comical distress, "I shall never be able to pull the bell."

But she did pull the bell somehow, and in a very few minutes was conducted by an overpowering footman into the presence of the advertiser.

At once, on entering the room, Dot was impressed by its serene stillness, and by a pervading suggestion of emerald.

All the appointments were of green, and the glorious summer sun flooded through windows hung with green silken curtains, causing the room to resemble a glade in a wood.

The change from the hall and street beyond was so abrupt as for the minute to deprive her of all power to distinguish individual objects, and before this power returned a calm, sweet voice addressed her:

"You have come to help me in my work?" it said.

"Y—yes, if you will have me," replied Dot, sighting the figure of a woman seated in a shady corner.

One of those silences peculiar to people of ready sympathies ensued this introduction, and it is not too much to say that each woman fell deeply in love with the other's voice right away, and longed for more.

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"Would you mind coming to me?" asked the lady, holding out both hands towards the door against which Dot stood.

Dot came impulsively; but when scarcely half-way stood stock-still, looking.

It was not the beauty of that radiant face, nor the spirit of prophecy it possessed, neither was it the golden glory of the hair, which had brought her thus to a standstill, looking. It was none of these; only the closed and sightless eyes!

For many minutes after that—minutes made holy by a Christ-like giving of love, these two women sat locked in each other's arms at peace. After awhile the lady disengaged a hand, suffering it to steal gently over Dot's features; and as it touched her eyes and lips, the lady murmured "beautiful, beautiful," after which silence reigned again, lasting till the evening breezes blew the day away.

"You will start to-morrow?" inquired the lady as Dot was leaving.

"Yes, yes, to-morrow, thank Heaven!"

"That is good," said the lady; and Dot went.

Dot got to work with a will, and so great was the encouragement of love, that her output surprised even herself. Every day her attachment to her employer grew more intense, and as she was engaged upon some proofs she knew the publisher was clamouring for, she often, of her own free will, stayed working till very late at night.

"Don't sit any longer to-night, dear," said the lady, hearing Dot sigh as she plied her pen, "your poor eyes must be very tired."

This was the night when Dot had reckoned to have the proofs ready, and she was labouring furiously to keep her word.

"Just one more sheet," she said, "and then I've done."

Her pen and thoughts flew together, and after a few minutes' writing she sat back with a deep breath.

"Why," she asked, glancing at the title page, "why have you put yourself down as 'R. C.'? Why not your own name or initials?"

"I had made up my mind to tell you that to-night; but it's too late now. It's all a long story, but I think one that will interest you. It refers to my past. I'll tell you to-morrow."

Accordingly, after spending the morrow morning wondering what on earth "R. C." could stand for, Dot settled herself down beside her friend, prepared to listen.

"You must know," began the lady, "that my life has not always been so loveless and dark as it is now. No, once I had both my sight and something to love. Probably no one but God knows *how* I loved. But I loved wrongly—not a worthless object, dear—but a man who could not return my love."

"Unnatural wretch!" muttered Dot, pressing her friend's arm passionately and kissing her.

"Hush, dear! don't say that. He never sought my love, so I cannot blame him. But oh! how I loved him—how I loved him!"

Her utterance ceased—hushed into silence by memory. Pre ently she felt Dot's tears upon her hand and with a great effort she went on.

"I was already known to a few publishers," she said, "but had done nothing of any account. He was unknown, but had written a book I said would make him famous. He refused my offer of introductions and left me; but not before I had stolen the book from his keeping. I meant to get it published myself, thinking he might accept fame where he refused love. But then, after he had gone, I fell ill of a malady which, departing, left me blind."

"The coward—the brute—the monster!" cried Dot, her face streaming with tears.

"No, no, he was none of those. It seemed very hard for me, but you cannot blame a man for not marrying whom he did not love. Well, when I recovered, I put his book about among my friends. One of them accepted it, and with your willing aid, I have just got it right for publication. They are the proofs of his book you have lately finished revising; 'R. C.' are his initials and—he is coming here to-day!"

Dot made little fists and fierce eyes when she heard this, but refrained from speaking.

"Yes; privately I have had him sought out and he is coming here to-day, for whom or for what he does not know."

Even as she spoke the hall bell rang and the overpowering footman announced:

"Mr. Clavering!"

In another moment Dot's husband stood confronting her. None but those who have taken part in a like situation could imagine the hush which fell upon that trio then. Dot and Dick, each with quivering lips and heaving bosoms, stood with eyes inquiringly addressed to the other's face. Each heart went forth with all the power of a mighty love deferred, yet each was halting to make the first advance.

Then slowly, very slowly, like the first dim dawn of reason, a remembrance of why he had come, crept into Dot's mind and her eyes reverted to the face of her blind friend. It was shining with a holy radiance. The light of a transfigured presence rested upon it, and it seemed divine.

Like a spirit the blind woman glided to Dot's side, and kissing her tenderly, she whispered:

"It is far—far better as it is, dear," and had passed from the room.

"Rosa!" said Dick.

But the door had closed behind her.

* * * * *

When after a long absence she reappeared, it would have done your heart good to see how Dot freed herself from Dick's arms and hugged Rosa into the room. And it would have done your heart still more good to see how she rushed against Dick and back again to Rosa, kissing first one, then the other, and nearly smothering both. And to have heard all the silly things she said in an infinitely beautiful way—why, it was enough to warm the heart of the great wide world.

"And so you knew all the while," she cried to Rosa when at length she found voice to speak rationally, "that Dick and I were married?"

"How could I help knowing when you told me so yourself?" asked Rosa, smiling.

"Yes, but how did you know he was the one we were working for so late at night?"

"There is only one 'R. C.' in the world," said Rosa simply.

Suddenly, Dot realised how vast was the spirit of self-sacrifice displayed in Rosa's actions. She realised what awful sufferings and conflicts must have filled her lonely heart, and flinging her arms again round her blind friend's neck, she whispered:

"Are you an angel?"

Dunstan Denn.

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You Fill in the Coupon. We do the Rest.

But fill it in at once. Only two more coupons will appear.

If the Figures you write on this Coupon should be the only correct forecast made, it will bring you in £1,000. In the last Competition two coupons similar to this brought in £500 each to two lucky individuals.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in England and Wales for the week ending July 1st, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk from whom you obtained this copy of "*S.S.*" to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Newsagents and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£100,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £100 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, and the £5 for bookstall boys.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in England and Wales for the corresponding period during the past three years.

The figures published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending July 4th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending July 3rd, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending July 2nd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,372	3,691	7,115	3,106	6,575	3,203

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

This Competition closes on Wednesday, June 28th.

S. S.

My estimate is - { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

.....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," AND "PASTIMES."

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THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XXXI.

My Mask Falls.

In the early afternoon of that same day I was digging in the garden, and lifting my eyes between almost every spadeful to snatch a glance at Enid, who was walking slowly up and down the bowling green in full sight. She dared not approach, for within a dozen yards of me another man was busy, one of Sir John's men, as grim and dry an old fellow as his master.

I turned the earth steadily, to all appearance a laborious, uncomplaining drudge, while secretly I revelled in all the glory of the bright April day, and felt the rich sweetness of my love's presence as added brightness to the sunshine.

The warm air was loaded with the haunting perfume of the great orchard near by, and the tender new leaves of the tall limes beside the green caught the sunshine and filtered it delicately upon her as she moved to and fro, herself the fairest thing among all the fresh beauties of the spring. I cannot describe how cheerful and contented I was as I made play with the clumsy spade that afternoon; 'tis true times were not of the gayest, but I was thankful for the luck we had enjoyed so far, and trusted time would better it. Meantime Enid was stealing continued glances at me, was thinking of me ever.

A trample of heavy riding boots sounded along the gravelled path beside the house. Before I turned my head I knew who it was, and felt no surprise to see Jack Postgate hurrying to place himself beside Enid. That I ground my teeth and uttered some wicked wishes concerning him I do not deny, and I did not resume my work until the sight of his father, spying the place over with keen, ferreting glance bade me beware.

I had seen their meeting before this happened, and had something to think of as I delved. Enid had received him with her usual civility, and Jack seemed transported. He burgeoned; he seemed to swell; he became all fire, all assiduity.

"What maggot has entered the fool's head now?" thought I. "He has at least the port of a happy lover." And at the idea of how far Jack was from the haven where he would be, I smiled to myself and forgave upon the spot his temporary advantage.

Sir John went back into the house, and now I saw Enid stepping in the direction of the path Jack had just followed. He sprang forward and cut her off, talking eagerly and earnestly, and she turned on her heel and walked rapidly towards the upper part of the green where a side door led into the house.

The bowling green was a long strip lying along the western face between the house and the moat. On two sides it was bounded by the walls, along the third ran the water, ten feet deep, and thirty feet wide, and only at the southern end was it open. It was the southern path from which Enid had turned away, and now she was making for the private door which opened directly on the turf.

I rested my hands on my spade and watched her swiftly-moving figure. I forgot my disguise, I forgot everything. I had no eyes for aught save those two. I saw him catch her up as she disappeared behind a tall clump of bushes. She did not come into sight again for an instant, and then I saw her start forward, struggling in the arms of Jack Postgate, as he vainly attempted to enfold her lithe, swaying figure in his embrace and snatch kisses from her lips.

I never ran so fast in my life as I flew over the garden, and down the bowling-green at that moment.

"Jack Postgate! You villain! You hound!" I screamed as I darted upon him and seized him by the throat, just as Enid sprang aside.

He had no time to lay hand upon his weapons; he fixed his clutch in my wrists, tearing furiously to rip away my grip, his eyes and tongue lolling horribly. Collecting my strength, I flung him furiously from me, and at the instant

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received a stunning blow upon the head which rolled me on the turf.

This timely diversion in favour of my enemy was effected by my fellow-gardener, who had followed me up and aided his young master by a swinging stroke of his spade handle. For some moments I scarce knew where I was; then I came to my senses to find myself in a situation which had been a reward to me for a hundred such blows. For my love had flung herself upon the grass beside me, and gathered me into her arms and pillowed my head upon her breast. She was uttering sweet, frightened words, and holding me close to the softest, kindest heart in all the world.

I looked up into her beautiful eyes and smiled, and she drew a long, thankful, quivering breath. Her hair had become unbound, and its dark, perfumed night had fallen over me, shutting out all the world besides her face.

"We are lost," she whispered.

"Nay," I whispered back, "I will swim the moat."

"Then do not move," she implored, "till you spring for the parapet. We are not two yards from it, and no one is very near."

"What?" said I softly. "Fly, and leave your position unexplained. No, my love, that I will never do."

I put up my lips and she kissed me dearly. Then I raised my head from her bosom and looked steadily upon my foes.

The man who struck me had given the alarm, and, ten yards away, stood Sir John and his son with drawn swords, guarding the southern end, the only open line of retreat. Behind them stood two or three of the servants and between the two parties was Siani, her short, stout figure planted on the ground like a tower, a shining poniard in her hand. I had marked the weapon fly loose—as one notes trifles at such times—when I flung my enemy away, and now I noticed the empty sheath at Jack's belt. I stood up and waved my hand to Siani to stand away. She did so, and Jack promptly covered me with a pistol. Enid sprang before me and the pistol muzzle trembled aside. At a glance I saw I was not yet suspected. My scream of rage when I flew upon Jack had been either unnoticed or inarticulate.

"Put up that pistol," commanded the elder man, sourly. "For my part, I scarce know why we stand here with naked swords before a base, unarmed groom. A dog-whip well thonged, were nearer his deserts."

The biting scorn in the thin, harsh voice, and hard eyes cowed the son, and Jack, who had recovered from his throttling, returned the pistol to his belt. He was as white as death, his eyes shooting hate at us, his face working convulsively in dreadful jealousy. To be scorned and left, and to see a wretched hind in coarse clothes held close and kissed, and hung over by a sweet lady, certes, it was no easy five minutes for Jack. His father turned his head and looked fixedly on Enid. To my great surprise, the old man seemed moved. His eyes softened and took on a look of pity; his voice, when he spoke, changed indescribably. She seemed to feel what he was going to say, and shrank and clung tighter to me. I, clumsy and slow, could not perceive.

"Ah, mistress," said he, "and I thought you everything that was innocent and good."

"And so she is," I cried hotly. "Never, never in your life, Sir John, held your mind a truer thought."

For an instant all stood rapt and silent. The speech was as unexpected as if a dumb animal had found a voice

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Every face was turned on me; hitherto, in their eyes, a mute, wordless clown.

Sir John recovered himself first of all.

"This is no miracle of tongues," he said, dryly. "Who are you, who have been playing a part so successfully? Come, sir, your name and station?"

I made him a low bow, and smiled grimly. My head was bare, for my hat had flown aside as I ran.

"Courtly, too," sneered the old man, "a malignant in hiding. Well, friend, you have played your game out. I never suspected you. Speak!"

"Father, father!" screamed Jack.

"Peace, peace!" cried Sir John, lifting his hand, and surveying me with kindling eye, "as I live, a light breaks across my mind. You are Geoffrey Heathcote."

A loud cry of surprise from the onlookers echoed his words, and Jack fairly hallooed for joy.

"A doomed man!" he called out, and laughed shrilly. "A doomed man! A fearful death, a traitor's death waits for him."

I took no notice of him, but kept my eyes fixed on the elder man.

"Yes, Sir John," said I. "Geoffrey Heathcote, and this lady, let me tell you, she has been playing a part, too." In the breathless silence which waited upon my words my voice sounded like that of a man who speaks aloud as he walks alone. "You have been addressing her," I continued, "as Mistress Vaughan. To that name she has a right, for she was born to it. But she has also every claim to another, for when I rescued her from the insulting attentions of your son, I interfered to protect—my wife!"

A loud hum of astonishment burst from the Puritan portion of my audience, and Sir John laid his hand over his mouth, bent down his head, and looked at us long and earnestly. It was now time for me to go but the old man made no move, and everyone waited for him, I, too. At last he took off his hat and made Enid a stiff bow.

"Mistress Heathcote," he said, "I ask your pardon. To use your maiden name was a device for which it were hard to blame you. Geoffrey Heathcote," he went on, turning to me, "I tell you the plain truth when I say that were the warrant I hold against you a private matter touching my own fortunes alone I would tear it in a thousand pieces and fling it to yonder moat."

I bowed and kept a wary eye on Jack who was fingering his pistol hungrily.

"But in that it concerns my duty as a magistrate and a sworn servant of the Commonwealth of England, I have no choice but to execute it, and I will procure you a fair trial."

"And, pending that, Sir John, you will see that no one disturbs my wife in her own house here."

"She shall be safe," said he.

"I thank you," I replied. "That is all I could wish."

Enid, of her own instinct, gently loosed her hold upon me, knowing that the time of my attempt was now come.

"Yield yourself," cried Jack, and flourished his sword. I made a single bound to the top of the low parapet and dived clean into the moat. As I clove the water the sound of a pistol shot rang in my ears, but it was too late, and I was untouched. I swam across under the water, and came up to breathe among a clump of sedges on the further side.

A deep drain emptied itself into the moat within a yard of my head, and I crept in to it and waded along till I was beyond pistol shot. Then I climbed out and looked back. Enid was crouched on the parapet, watching eagerly, and I heard her cry of joy as I waved my hand and started to run down the park; for there was need to put my best foot foremost.

My enemies had got to horse, and now swept round the further angle of the house in hot pursuit. I had three hundred yards between me and cover, and I fled for my life A plantation of thickset young ashes lay before me, and I strained every nerve to gain it before my pursuers could come up to me. No law was granted to so obstinate a fugitive, and as I saw the pashed hedge which kept the cattle at bay draw dearer and nearer, I heard shot after shot ring out. The sounds filled me with renewed hope.

I dared not glance behind to see how I stood, but if they had taken to their pistols, it was scarcely likely they expected to run me down in the open. One or two balls whistled pretty nigh, but the best of shots can take no aim on a galloping horse, and I tumbled over the hedge and darted into the wood in safety. Here was no ground for a horse to follow, and knowing the place as I did, I feared no pursuit on foot. I pushed swiftly through the ashes and came to a bridle path, down which I flew at my utmost speed. It led straight to the keeper's cottage and there lay my one chance for escape, Whitesock.

Let me but feel her powerful, springy ribs between my knees again, and they must have nags, beyond anything I ever knew of, who would bring us to book. Ten minutes fast running brought me to the little clearing where the keeper's cottage stood. There was no sign of Whitesock anywhere and I rushed to a wattled hut behind the house. The great bloodhound was fastened to the post of the door to prevent anyone entering, and he leapt upon me as soon as I ventured within length of his tether, almost knocking me down.

"What, Ranger!" I cried, and my voice and his sense of smell convinced him of his mistake, and he crouched at my feet and licked my hand. The door was fastened by a wooden hasp. I withdrew it and went in. A joyful whinny rang through the place, and seeing that Whitesock was loose I called her and hurried to the house.

Here I hoped to furnish myself with some sort of weapons, and I lifted the latch and entered. No one was at home, and I looked eagerly round, but, at first glance, saw nothing which could serve me. Then I espied Ralph's quarter-staff propped in a corner, and seized that, in default of handier weapons. I saw no signs of horse furniture, either, and so scrambled on the mare and rode away barebacked.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN EVIL PLIGHT.

WHITESOCK was mad with delight to feel herself once more free to gallop away under me, and charged down the ride which led from the keeper's cottage to the open park with great, rearing leaps, swift and light, like a huge hare. Her wild joy and the rushing play of the wind about my temples inspired me with an almost equal excitement. Her tremendous bounds were taken so smoothly and easily that the motion was delightful in the extreme; weeks had passed since I had felt her firm, elastic body playing under me, my hateful mask was thrown aside, and my weary "Dim Saesneg," flung to the winds for ever.

It had been a wonderful screen, but, oh! I can never depict the strain under which I lived to make it good. A hundred and a hundred times during the past few weeks a swift, chance, unthinking command or remark had been uttered to me in English, and a hundred times I had been about to obey or answer, and just caught myself in the nick of time, my heart in my throat. 'Twas a labour of Hercules to feign ignorance of my native tongue, and now the load was removed.

My heart was as light as a feather as I flew along. Where was another horse to match Whitesock and overtake her? Enid, I felt certain, was safe now her position was known. I dared not trust myself with Sir John, or a fair trial would hang me as high as Haman, so long as the law laid down opposition to the Commonwealth Army as treason; but I believed him capable and willing to prevent harm coming to her. I must escape now and hide somewhere, until she could join me with the money Roger had in safe keeping, and then, hey! for *la belle France*, where so many of my friends lay in exile. All this flashed through

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my mind as Whitesock skimmed like a swallow down the narrow ride, and flew out into the open park.

A shrill halloo rang in my ears as I cleared the trees. I looked over my shoulders and saw three horsemen, whom I had out-run and out-ridden, spurring across the grass to cut me off. They had been beating along the edge of the wood, and chance had brought us to a point closer than I expected or wished for.

I sat tight down and guided Whitesock with my knees. She obeyed as another horse with the rein, and I turned her towards a corner of the park where was a gate, the gate which Roger had used to bring her to the keeper's cottage. It might be unlocked, and, if so, I was safe.

This change of direction threw my pursuers out, and Whitesock swiftly left them behind. Five minutes brought us to the gate I sought. It was locked, and all along the park bounds stood the unbroken row of stout oaken pales, ten feet high. I had no time to attempt the forcing or breaking of the lock, for my enemies were too close upon me. I could only turn Whitesock and send her sweeping along, skirting the tall fence and heading for the main gates, as I had been shaping a course at first. Our delay at the side gate had lost much of our lead, but Whitesock began picking it up again at once.

Hitherto it had been a great delight to me that Butley Croft had escaped the rough usages common to Cavalier houses; but now a little dispaling would have served my turn to a wonder, and I had been out in the open country and far away, instead of galloping along behind prison bars.

My pursuers were Sir John and two mounted men attending him, too strong a party for a man armed only with a quarter-staff to turn upon. Away darted the gallant mare, keeping her tremendous pace as easily as if she were ambling on a smooth road, flying by copse and dingle, startling the dappled deer, who fled before her with a smooth, gliding flight no swifter and lighter than her own.

The water which filled my clothes streamed down her sides, streaking the bright satin of her coat with dark stains, and dripping steadily on the grass. So riding, I came near to the avenue and saw a single horseman hastening to set himself in my way. It was Jack Postgate, and he seemed to be returning from the main gates. I could only avoid him by deliberately turning to right or left, and I was not inclined to do so. His pistols had been recharged, for he drew one and pointed it full upon me.

But, as often happens when a man has two pistols in reserve, he was so anxious to get the use of both that he wasted the first shot by firing too soon. He tossed the weapon into the grass and drew another; but the prodigious speed at which Whitesock was bearing down upon him was no help to his nerves, and I felt no fear. I stooped down to her mane as I saw his finger crook on the trigger, and the ball whistled over me. His drawn sword was in his left hand, and he charged it to the right; but I cared nothing for his sword.

I tucked the quarterstaff under my arm, laid it in rest as a man would a lance, and rode upon him like a champion in an old romance of chivalry. I had no saddle to help me, and had to trust to my seat and a handful of Whitesock's mane for a purchase.

As we met, he attempted, by the management of spur and rein, to turn his nag aside and miss my clumsy spear, aiming for a slashing cut as I passed, but the beast was not quick enough, and the quarter-staff took him on the shoulder, and trundled him clean over the tail of his horse. I laughed and rode on, leaving Jack all of a heap on the grass.

I promise you my laughing was ended a minute later when I turned the last bend, and saw the gates shut, and a couple of fellows posted there with muskets which were trained upon me instantly. I had known all along that Sir John was a wary old soldier whom one did not easily outmanœuvre, and I recognised this as a characteristic stroke.

I checked Whitesock, and she stood for a moment while I surveyed the state of affairs at less than forty yards distance.

I was within easy shot, yet they made no offer to fire, and this caution showed the danger of pushing upon them. Sir John's followers had smelt powder on too many battlefields to be held cheaply, and one or other of us would get a bullet, and I was as unwilling it should be Whitesock as myself. I turned aside and swept across the open park once more; they never offered to check my flight, and I saw that I was to be taken alive if possible. The thud of the pursuing steeds came hurrying at my back, and I sent Whitesock along a little faster and glanced over my shoulder.

They were pounding stubbornly along in my wake hoping to corner me somewhere when it would be short work between three men armed with sword and pistol, and one flourishing a quarter-staff. For the first time my heart sank within me as I saw the position in which I stood. A ten-foot paling could not stop me, and escape was easy by climbing; but Whitesock, poor lass, must be left on the wrong side, and I go out into the world on my two feet. I cudgelled my brains for a gap or break anywhere, but I could not call one to mind, nor do I believe one exists.

The last summer of my grandfather's life was spent in overlooking the repaling of the park, the fancy for which had struck him in the spring, and he devoted a whole grove of oaks to the work, and made of it a job to last a hundred years.

I saw no other way or help for it, and struck off towards the south-eastern corner, putting Whitesock to the top of her speed. The park was dotted here with thick clumps of brushwood, and I soon dropped my rear-guard. I wheeled, and showed myself as if racing back towards the house, then, in shelter of a long narrow plantation, turned and went on my former road.

This would throw them out a good ten minutes, for, through a gap, I had seen them riding across to cut me off, as they expected, and so when I came to the barrier I was riding quite alone. Had I had the necessary tools it would have taken an hour or more to make a gap in that huge solid fence sufficient for the mare to pass through, so, with a heavy sigh, I tossed over my quarter staff and prepared to follow.

I gave her a few caresses, then mounted the pales, an easy thing from the inside where the crossbars formed a ladder, dropped to the ground on the other side, and plunged into the heath. I followed the narrow, open strips of grass running between clumps of thorn and bramble and was lost to sight from the park in a moment.

(To be continued.)

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Thomas: "Well, Susie, if you feel that way, my shoulder is at your disposal."

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SHORT TRUTHS.

F. R. G.—Aignes-Mortes, once an important French harbour on the Mediterranean, and from which St. Louis sailed in his crusades of 1248 and 1270, is now miles from the sea, on account of the silt brought down by the canal, and the Government will sell at auction the picturesque ruins of the walls of the port.

A. R.—In Sweden yarn is not allowed to be sold if it contains .0009 per cent. of arsenic. A carpet has been condemned by the inspectors because it contained a 1000th part of a grain of arsenic in sixteen square inches.

Violet.—To clean white straw hats, first wash them with soap and water, rinse them well and dry them in the open air. Beat up the white of an egg and rub well in by means of a piece of clean flannel.

W. B.—There are about ninety deaths in Shakespeare's plays.

D. D.—The Turks are supposed to be the dirtiest nation in Europe, but they are clean compared to the Persians, the dirtiest people in Asia; or to the native inhabitants of Western Zanzibar, the filthiest in Africa; or to the Patagonians, the least cleanly of all the peoples in America.

Pipe.—About fourteen millions are annually spent on tobacco and pipes in the United Kingdom.

Parent.—A child's bed should slope a little from the head to the foot, so that the head may be a little higher than the feet, but never bend the neck to get the head on to a pillow. This makes the child round-shouldered, cramps the veins and arteries, and interferes with the free circulation of the blood. Even when a child is several years old the pillow should be thin and made of hair, and not on any account of feathers.

Crown.—The royal crown of Persia, which dates back to remote ages, is in the form of a pot of flowers, surmounted by an uncut ruby the size of a hen's egg.

Salt.—A mass of 90,000,000 tons of pure, solid, compact rocksalt, located on an island 185 feet high, which rises from a miserable sea-marsh on the route from Brashear to New Iberia, up the River Teche, in Louisiana, is one of the wonders of the world. How this island, which contains over 300 acres of excellent land, ever came into existence in such a locality is a matter of conjecture. Vegetation is prolific, and the scenery is beautiful and varied. In the centre of this island, which is the only solid spot in the vast expanse of sea-marsh for miles around, rises Salt Peak, the largest body of exposed rocksalt in the world.

Sound.—It is a fact that men buried in an avalanche of snow hear distinctly every word uttered by those who are seeking for them, while their most strenuous shouts fail to penetrate even a few feet of snow.

C. R.—The constitution of Costa Rica prescribes hospitality to strangers as a sacred duty, and declares citizenship to be forfeited by ingratitude to parents, abandonment of wife or children, and neglect of the obligations due to the family.

Flo.—Horticulture is taught in the common schools of Germany. The pupils are required to bud, graft, plant seeds, etc., and they are given instructions on the subject of plant growth, adaptation of varieties to soil and climate.

Pro.—The theatres of Paris have popular performances on certain days, when the seats cost only a quarter or half the usual price.

Foot.—A perfectly formed foot should, according to anatomists, be as long as the bone in the forearm, which extends from the elbow to the joint of the wrist. This seems to be abnormally long in a tall person, but is the measurement taken by artists. Of course, arms are sometimes out of proportion, being far too short for the general height, but it is rare that an arm is too long for the stature of a person.

G. I. R.—For the hide of a full-grown giraffe, greatly sought after in Africa for whip and sandal making, the native hunters get from £3 to £5.

Head.—Where Great Britain has 27 cattle on a given area, Ireland has 49, and Denmark 38. Ireland has 864 cattle for every 1,000 of her people, but Great Britain has 188 head of horned stock for every 1,000 inhabitants.

Tongue.—The English and Chinese languages are the only two among all those known that class inanimate objects as of the neuter gender. Some languages, like the German, have a neuter gender, but it is used indiscriminately for animate and inanimate objects.

Baby.—It would take up too much space to tell you all the notions prevalent about babies. In Spain the infant's face is swept with a pine-tree bough to bring good luck. In Ireland a belt made of woman's hair is placed about the child to keep harm away. Garlic, salt, bread, and steak are put into the cradle of a new-born babe in Holland. Roumanian mothers tie red ribbons round the ankles of their children to preserve them from harm.

Egg.—The animal that lays the greatest number of eggs at a time is the white ant of tropical countries, which, according to a high authority, produces 86,400 each day during the season.

P. R.—You cannot brush the head too often, for the oftener it is done the more healthy will be the skin, and thus keeping the hair in good condition. Thus brushing attains two objects—health of the skin of the head and strength of the hair.

Horse.—Russia is estimated to own one-half of the horses of the world.

Pest.—A great dish at Egyptian harem-feasts is that of a lamb roasted whole. After the manner of a nest of Chinese boxes, each smaller than the other, the lamb is stuffed with a whole turkey, the turkey with a chicken, the chicken with a pigeon, the pigeon with a quail, and the quail with a becafico, the smallest bird known except the humming-bird. The lamb is roasted over a slow fire until it is almost ready to fall to pieces.

I. J.—The small letter "i" was formerly written without the dot. The dot was introduced in the fourteenth century to distinguish "i" from "e" in hasty and indistinct writing. The letter "i" was originally used where "j" is now employed. The distinction between "i" and "j" was introduced by the Dutch printers at a comparatively recent date, and the "j" was dotted because the "i," from which it was derived, was written with a dot.

G. L.—Quite right. The wide utilisation of waterfalls for the generation of power has suggested to a French engineer the title of white coal.

Word.—There are now over 250,000 words in the English language, acknowledged by the best authorities. Yet there are people who long to use nearly that number when they hit their thumb with a hammer.

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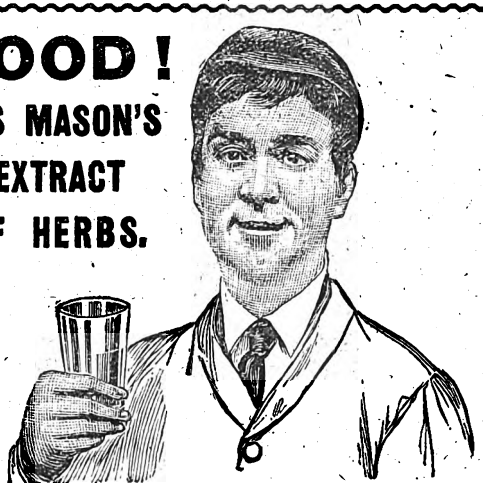

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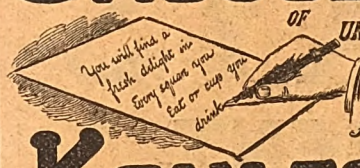

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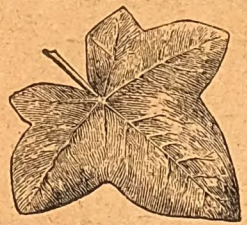

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 547. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 24TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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Short Stories

BY ARTHUR PEARSON

GINGERNUTS.

THE King of Macronia (the land of macaroons), who for some time past had been in the prime of life, had just arisen and was seated undressed beside his bed. His house minister was there and handed him his hose; in the heel of one sock was a hole. The King was wont to pay more attention to his beautiful boots than to whole socks; however, the hole did not escape his sharp eyes. In disgust he took the sock out of the minister's hand and pushed his forefinger through the hole clear up to his knuckle, saying:

"Of what use is it, that I am king, since I have no wife? What do you say to my marrying?"

"Your Majesty, that is a sublime thought, a thought that would certainly have occurred to me, if I may make so bold, had I not felt that Your Majesty most assuredly would deign to utter it for yourself."

"Beautiful!" replied the King, "but do you believe that I shall be able to find a wife suitable for me?"

"Pooh! Ten where others could find but one," said the courtier.

"A princess to please me must be clever and beautiful, and there is one point on which I lay especial stress: you know how fond I am of gingernuts. In my whole kingdom there is not a person who understands how to bake them exactly right, and the princess whom I choose must know how to do this to perfection."

When the minister heard this he gave a whistle of dismay, but quickly collecting himself, said:

"A king like your Majesty will, without doubt, find a princess who understands how to bake gingernuts."

"We shall see, we shall see," said the King, and on the very same day, accompanied by his minister, he began a tour of the kingdoms of his different neighbours, whom he knew had princesses to give in marriage.

Only three princesses were found who were beautiful and clever enough to suit the King, and of these not one could bake gingernuts.

"I really cannot bake gingernuts," said the first princess, in answer to the King's question, "but I can make beautiful little almond cakes. Wouldn't those suit you?"

"No," replied the King, "I must have gingernuts."

The second princess, in reply to the same question, mocked at the King and said angrily:

"What nonsense! Princesses who can bake gingernuts do not exist."

The King fared worse at the hands of the third, who was the most beautiful and the most charming.

She gave the King no opportunity to ask his question, but took things into her own hands, and demanded whether he knew how to play on the Jew's harp. And when he said he did not she sent him away.

He pleased her very much, she admitted, but she was so extravagantly fond of music of the Jew's harp that she would never marry a man who could not play it.

The King and his minister returned home, and as they alighted from their carriage the King said:

"Nothing has come of all this!"

"Nothing, your Majesty," said the minister mournfully.

"What shall I do?" sighed the King. "I must have a wife."

"If you would only give up the gingernuts," ventured the minister timidly.

"For the good of my people I will," exclaimed the noble King, and he resolved to marry the princess whom he had first sought.

"She is the one who knows how to bake almond cakes," he said. "Go and ask her if she will be my wife."

The minister went, returned the next day, and said

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she was no longer in the matrimonial market, for she had married the king of the Land of Capers.

"Then go to the second princess," said the King. Again the minister returned without having accomplished anything, for this princess had died.

Then the King thought a long time. He absolutely must have a wife, so he ordered the minister to go to the third princess and see if she had changed her mind. The minister obeyed, though he did it unwillingly, for his wife assured him that his errand was a useless one.

The King anxiously awaited his return. His mind was on her question concerning the Jew's harp, and the remembrance of it was most annoying.

The third princess received the minister very cordially. She said she had changed her mind about marrying a man who could play the Jew's harp.

"Dreams are but vain and empty things, especially those of youth." She realized that her wish could not be fulfilled, and as the King pleased her, she had decided to marry him.

The minister rode home as fast as his horse could go, and the King embraced him, and conferred so many decorations on him that he had to wear some of them on his head.

The town was trimmed with bunting, garlands were thrown across the streets from house to house, and the marriage was so splendidly celebrated that the people could talk of nothing else for a fortnight.

All went well with the King and Queen for a year. The King had quite forgotten his gingernuts and the Queen her Jew's harp.

However, the King got out of bed one morning with the wrong foot foremost, and after that, of course, all went wrong. It rained the entire day; the imperial globe fell down, and the little cross on the top broke off; the court painter brought a new globe on which Macronia was painted red instead of blue, as he had been ordered, and to cap the climax the Queen had a headache.

It came to pass that the wedded pair quarrelled for the first time. Why or wherefore, they knew not. In short, the King was cross and the Queen was snappy, and would have the last word. After the quarrel had gone on for some time the Queen shrugged her shoulders disdainfully and said:

"You've found fault the entire day. And why, I ray? You, who can't so much as play the Jew's harp!"

He retorted sharply:

"You've nothing to say. You can't even bake gingernuts."

For the first time the Queen did not reply, but remained quiet, and without exchanging another word they went to their respective rooms.

The Queen seated herself in the corner of the sofa and wept, and thought sadly:

"What a foolish wife you are! Have you lost your reason? You should not have begun a quarrel so stupidly."

The King paced up and down his room, rubbed his hands and said:

"It is truly a bit of good luck that my wife can't bake gingernuts. Why did I answer her when she reproached me for not knowing how to play on the Jew's harp?"

After repeating this three or four times he felt more cheerful. He began to whistle his favourite tune, examined the large portrait of the Queen, which hung in his room, mounted a chair, and with his handerchief brushed off a cobweb that hung over her nose, and said:

"She is surely fretting, my good little wife. I'll see what she's doing."

He went down the long hall to her door. All had gone wrong on this day, the servants had even forgotten the lamps, although it was eight o'clock and quite dark. He entered the room, putting out his hands before him so as not to stumble against the furniture. Suddenly he felt something warm.

"Who is it?" he said.

"It is I," replied the Queen.

"What's the matter, my pet?"

"I want to ask your forgiveness," said the Queen, "for having been so cross."

"You don't need to do that at all," said the King, throwing his arms about her neck. "I'm more to blame than you are. Let's forget all about it. There are two words that we'll never allow used in our kingdom, Jew's harp and——"

"And gingernuts," interrupted the Queen laughing, as she secretly wiped two little tears from her eyes.

J. LEANDER.

A SATIRICAL innkeeper advertises his house as "the only second-class hotel in the world."

A PHYSICIAN was lecturing lately on the ignorance of people of their own complaints, and said that a lady once asked him what his next lecture would be upon, and being told "the circulation of the blood," replied that she should certainly attend, for she had been troubled with that complaint a long time.

A TRAMP was arrested, taken before an Australian justice, and sentenced to three months. His worship, in explaining the sentence, remarked that while there was no evidence that the prisoner had been guilty of any crime, he thought it prudent to commit him, as he had the wild, haggard look of a man about to start a newspaper.

WHEN L., the Irish comedian, was starring once at a small town in his native land, a rehearsal was called on Monday morning for the night's piece.

"Now," said L. to the manager, "I want a posse of constabulary on the bridge, a group of male and faymale peasants on the right, and a squad of soldiery on the left. How many supers have ye got?"

"Two, sir."

"That'll do; go on with the rehearsal."

THE heroic man who tries to scare a runaway horse into stopping should be chained. He rushes into the middle of the street, flings one arm with a hat on it towards the east, and the other arm with an umbrella attached towards the west, and shouts "Hi, yi, yi, yi!" just as the tired horse is about to stop.

As he rushes back to the pavement, the horse, with a new scare, breaks into a fresh run, swings the cart into a shop-window, starts a few other horses, and everything is to pay.

That evening the man tells his wife that he nearly stopped a runaway horse, but that none of the idle bystanders would help him.

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By E. MILLS.

VI.—THE MAN WHO CAME TO STAY.

Willwanda was a hospitable station, I must say that for it. Jack liked to see the house full, and it was as jolly as a place usually is when it is bossed by young people. There was no stern parent to order "lights out" at ten o'clock, just when we were beginning to enjoy ourselves; no old people who had forgotten their youth so far as to wonder what delight frivolous young ones could find in wandering about a moonlit garden, sweet with the scent of starry jasmine and heliotrope, regardless of probable snakes and probable chills; and yet a stern head of the house would have been very useful in the case of the "man who came to stay."

It was the day before the show, which triennially cast the little bush town, twenty miles from Willwanda, into a whirlpool of excitement. Our house was near the high road, and people had been coming in all day to break their journey, and lunch *en route* from stations up the river to the town, and my pretty Sydney friend and I had a merry time presiding over the lunch. Susie, my school-girl sister, had a good time also, for there were several of her own young friends amongst the travellers, although she declared we made her wait on all the old fogies, and sent her out to the pantry a hundred and seventy-four times for fresh cups; but Susie was always prone to exaggeration.

Amongst a party of men we knew came one we did not. However, he was evidently a friend of theirs, and we welcomed him accordingly, although he was not a nice young man, being grimy about the necktie and hands, with a soft, foolish face, small, cunning brown eyes, and hair that wanted cutting. We told Susie to look after him, and returned to our own end of the table. We were having a merry time trying to keep to our rule of not engaging ourselves beforehand for dances at the show ball.

However, I found time to ask Jack who the stranger was. He said he had not caught his name, but fancied "someone had said that he was a fellow who had been staying at Rushy Creek," a station beyond the ranges belonging to our oldest and dearest friends, which in itself was introduction enough in the bush, and one more to our "lunch" would not matter. "I will ask Ray," he added; "I believe he came with him." But a few moments afterwards I saw that Jack and Ray Smith were deep in the causes of the fall in the price of wool, and knew that the all-engrossing subject would drive all other thoughts from my brother's head.

And it really did not matter, as the man of the grimy collar would pass out of our ken, probably for ever, in the course of the afternoon. I happened to be near him soon afterwards, and heard Susie ask him his name.

"Johnnie King," he answered with a leer which was meant to be fascinating. "Most people call me plain Johnnie; you can if you like."

"Thank you," said Susie, "but I would much rather call you 'Mr. King.'"

However, this snub did not affect the young man at all. He listened to every word we said, and laughed loudly at all our local jokes, and once, when my pretty friend made a bright answer to some chaffing question from one of our neighbours, "Mr. King" thumped on the table until the glasses rang again, and shouted, "Good for you, old girl." I wondered then that no one in particular crushed him: perhaps his "introducer" was too ashamed of his *protégé* to "own up." The riders rose to go soon afterwards. We liked them all, but felt relieved, thinking we had seen the last of the creature who wandered over to the stable-yard without having even the decency to say "Good-bye."

By four o'clock the last visitor had departed, and we girls stood at the gate talking over the day's events, and watching the specks of dust on the high road, which betokened selectors and travellers still show-ward bound.

"I like the Smiths," I said; "but I hope they won't bring their new friend near me again if he is their friend."

"No," said Alice, my pretty friend, "it is indeed to be hoped they won't bring him to the ball. I am sure he would be difficult to get rid of."

"They won't bring him," announced Susie, who was hanging to the cross-piece of the trellis by her hands, practising lifting her own weight, "they won't bring him, for he means to escort you himself. Don't faint or scream, girls, but just look up the path behind you!"

We turned simultaneously, and saw the creature

strolling towards us, his hands in his pocket, and a "monarch-of-all-I-survey" air about him. He had not gone after all!

Was it possible that Jack had asked him to stay? My soul rose in wrath at the thought.

"Nice evenin', ladies," he said, "and a nice place you've got here." Then, leaning familiarly on the gate, he added: "I reckon a fellow could do worse than put in a week or so on the stations about here. You couldn't live cheaper, for one thing!"

His last remark did not seem to call for an answer, and for a time nothing was to be heard but the cooing of scrub-doves in the undisturbed wilderness of the lower garden. Then Susie having accomplished the requisite number of up liftings without letting go, tumbled to the ground—a heap of brown holland pinafore, tumbled masses of red-brown hair, and liberal show of slim, black-stockinged legs. Fixing her bright grey eyes on the creature, she said:

"Are you going to the show, Mr. King? It's best to get into town the night before, you know!"

"Oh, yes, I'll give it a look in the morning," he said nonchalantly. "I've just been talking to your housemaid (as nice a bit of muslin as I ever set eyes on), and she tells me the end room is where you usually put bachelors, so I just slung my swag there."

"Indeed," I began freezingly, then remembering that perhaps this peculiar young man was a long-expected cattle buyer, to whom it behoved us to be civil, I softened my voice a little and said that "my brother was at the stable, and perhaps Mr. King would like to look at the horses."

"No thanks; I'm a slight better off where I am, I reckon—I don't get young ladies' company every day," and he edged a little nearer to my pretty friend, who crimsoned with anger and looked helplessly at Susie.

"Then you had better go inside," said that damsel politely; "there are plenty of papers on the hall table. We always have an hour's sleep before tea. Come along, girls!" and seizing an arm of each, she whirled us off to the house.

My young sister's powers of invention always staggered me.

"Really, Susie," I said, "you should not tell such stories, even if the man is horrid, and he may be the buyer from Rushy Creek to look at our stud cattle!"

"Stories!" said Susie scornfully. "I'm going to be an authoress, so it's all right. As for the man being a cattle-buyer, fiddle-sticks! He looks too stupid to know a shorthorn from an Alderney. He's just horrid and nothing else."

And he was "horrid."

On the strength of knowing our friends, Jack did not like to give him the cold shoulder. My big brother was decidedly too easy-going on some points, and I, like him, had an almost morbid dread of hurting people's feelings. Susie alone was hard-hearted and decisive, and took the lead in most things, despite our united efforts to keep her within proper bounds.

Jack was busy, too, settling things for the show, which would last for three days. He was on the committee, and would have to stay in town a night after it was over, returning next day to Willwanda to pay off a large camp of ring-barkers. The contractor had asked him to bring a certain sum in notes or gold. It was contrary to the usual custom, of course, but Jack was always good-natured; he was to get the money in town, and send it out by me to Mr. Kenrick, our old book-keeper, who always slept in the house when Jack was away.

I was packing my dress basket on the dining-room table, and receiving instructions re the money from my brother, when we were annoyed to find that Mr. King had strolled in from the garden, and was openly listening—his foolish face set in an uninterested stare. He made some facetious remarks about my ball dress, asking me if it was "toole" or "crêpon," and then strolled out again, after helping himself to the whisky and soda on the sideboard.

"Really, Jack," I said, "his manners are awful."

"Granted, sis; but he goes to-day, and we must make the best of any friends of the Ropers. He's got a fair cheek staying a night without an invitation. Hurry up the girls—the four-in-hand will be along directly."

It was a lovely morning. Jack tooled the four greys along merrily, and the two jackaroos in the back seat with Susie kept us alive with their remarks. Mr. King and several of the station hands caught us up at the first gate, and Jack noticed that he was riding a Rushy Creek horse, for he knew the brand; and in answer to a question, Mr. King remarked that he had paid a long price for him, which was likely, for the horse was one of the famous Warrior breed, and was probably as good as he looked.

The owner had apparently made great strides in our acquaintance, for he called Susie by her Christian name, and spoke of the good time we should all have at the ball. We certainly did not mean to let him trouble us in town. But, alas! when a man is as thick-skinned as a rhinoceros, and cannot even see a snub, it is hard work to get rid of him. Our crumpled rose leaf, our "fly in the amber," was still Mr. King. He followed us everywhere. He took real delight in playing third. He turned up to all our snug little lunches amongst the long grass and bluebells in the showground paddock—he rose serene above our attempts to snub and ignore him.

He waited for us at the door of the ballroom, still attired in the grimy collar and unshapely necktie. As he had left his luggage—a tiny strapped valise—locked in his room at Willwanda, this was not to be wondered at, but that was a fact we were not aware of then. He did not stay at our hotel, and we congratulated ourselves upon the fact until we found he had been quartering himself upon our friends in town, introducing himself as a friend of ours, until Susie made a house-to-house visitation, and gave him away; but as this did not transpire until the last day of the show, the creature had still got the best of us. We cut him dead after that.

As I said before, Jack was obliged to stay in town the day after the show, and one of the jackaroos drove the trap out at sunrise through the sleeping town. As usual, the last night had been a wild one amongst the men folk of all degrees, and the main street looked strange indeed, strewn with upturned forms, gates off their hinges, blankets, pillows, and sticks of hotel furniture, for there had been a grand pulling out of bed of all the quieter and sleep-loving portion of the masculine community.

My pretty friend gave her opinions freely upon the subject, and I backed her up. We were girls and could not see wherein lay the exquisite joy of losing a night's rest, drinking more vile bush hotel concoctions than were needed or wished for, and smashing a lot of furniture that had to be paid for at double its original value next morning.

I cannot say whether the Willwanda jackaroos were with the attacking or defending party. At any rate,

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"Hallo! girls; so we're all home again."

they agreed with all we said, but, as Susie said afterwards, "they looked really too innocent to be quite guiltless."

One youth especially, who had been reared in the rigid moral atmosphere of his Low Church parson father's home, was loud in his denunciations of such "silly practices." He had curly yellow hair, an English complexion, sea-blue eyes, and a handsome, straight-featured face, but I am afraid he was not as good as he looked. Indeed, I have heard Jack say he was at the bottom of all the tricks and pranks at the quarters.

We felt a little tired and distrait after so much unusual dissipation; sorry enough to leave the little town in its holiday mood, but glad, glad, indeed, to think we had seen the last of the objectionable Johnnie King. The two boys had to be in the saddle again after lunch, having orders to take to the ring-barkers, and would be camped out that night. For once I thought girls had the best of it, as we straggled up to the house on feet that ached with three night's continuous dancing.

How cool and fresh the old creepered place looked, how invitingly my string hammock swung amongst the tweediana and grape leaves. And then my thoughts received a sudden shock. The hammock was not empty! I knew the soles of those gigantic bluchers and the old felt hat that rested amongst the cushions of Liberty silk, which had been brought from the drawing-room as coolly as if they belonged to the creature, for there he was luxuriating amongst the vines.

"Look, girls!" I gasped. They stopped in unfeigned horror. Then Susie looked at the sky, which was clouding over ominously:

"It will rain," she said, "and he will be flooded up here for weeks."

"Hallo! girls, so we're all home again. I fancy I started a bit ahead of the trap," was his cheerful greeting. But, in offended silence, we all three turned our backs and marched into the house.

Susie left us with a determined look on her face, and went out of a side-door in the direction of the creature's room.

"Oh, Alice," I cried, "if only Jack had come home! He would be determined now, I know."

"My dear, it will rain cats and dogs, and he will have such a good excuse to stay, especially if the creeks come down," was all the comfort Alice could give me.

I picked up my little handbag and called the housemaid. "Tell Mr. Kenrick to come here, Jane, and bring a tray laid for three into my room at lunch time. Mr. King will have his in the dining-room."

A few moments afterwards Mr. Kenrick came in, and I gave him the notes from the bank. He was sleeping in Jack's room.

"If you put it in Jack's little safe, I think it will be all right," I said, "but it is a large sum of money. Thank goodness we are in the bush and need not fear thieves. I wish Jack had used his cheque-book altogether, however."

"Do look at Susie," cried Alice, who was standing listlessly by the window. I stared helplessly at a vision of Susie flying through the rain towards the stables.

"She is becoming very unruly," I said. "Jack really ought to send her to a boarding school."

She was back again in a few minutes, soaked to the skin, of course, for the rain was now falling in torrents.

"Where have you been, Susie?" said the creature in the hammock, rather sharply for him I thought.

"Only to give Jack's orders to the men," she answered.

"What orders, I'd like to know?"

"And so you may," said Susie, "for it isn't a secret. Just on no account to leave the station. The threatening rain made him alter his mind about them, you know. All hands were to go out and help shift camp."

"And what the devil do you mean by alterin' them orders? A brat like you," began the creature, his voice shaking with anger. Things were certainly taking a strange turn. I called Susie away at once, and while she changed her clothes gave her a scolding for talking to Mr. King.

"The man is evidently not in a fit state to talk to women at all," I said. "No doubt he has been at the whisky again, and Jack has no right to send orders by you. I can't understand him; he sent no message to Mr. Kenrick."

"Well, I saw him last," said Susie, "and I know what I am doing. You will be awfully sorry you scolded me before another sun goes down."

She wore an injured and important air, and tore off again directly I released her, nearly knocking down poor, feeble old Mr. Kenrick in her precipitant flight.

"She was carrying something under her cloak when she went to the stable the first time," said Alice, "and I believe it was Mr. King's valise. She may have some plan for getting rid of him. My dear, do you really think he is tipsy? I am so terrified of men like that. Come and look at him." I joined her at the window, which commanded a view of the hammock. "I wish Mr. Kenrick wasn't so old," I remarked. "He was here in father's time, and Jack likes to keep him on. It would kill the old fellow if we put anyone in his place; and his heart is weak too, so we never tell him anything worrying."

"Thank goodness Susie has stopped the men going out," said Alice. "I vote we send for the boys to come over. Mr. King looks so horrid."

And so he did. Lying moodily in the hammock,

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buttoning and unbuttoning his coat, his coarse, stupid face strangely transformed with temper, for Susie had evidently put him out. he certainly did not look very nice. "Perhaps he knows we won't lunch with him," I suggested.

Above the hammock the ancient vines had straggled in until their thick, interlacing branches had made a sort of double roof. Jack was always declaring he would have it cut down, for it was gradually displacing the rafters, but Susie had begged it off—for she had an ingenious method of clambering up the roof, and slipping in under the eaves, and into the natural hammock made by the vines. Lat erly she had been growing too big to get in easily, and so our astonishment can be imag ned when from our vantage window we saw a strange thing happen. Mr King had unbuttoned his coat again, and was fingering something evidently hidden in his vest, when from out the leafy screen above his head a hand and arm darted, and quick as lightning seized the hidden object, whatever it was, and disappeared again into the vines. With a string of highly original curses, Mr. King tumbled out of the hammock on to the floor. He looked very scared and astonished, as well he might. Alice threw open the window and screamed: "Susie! Susie!"

She dropped lightly to the ground and covered him with her revolver.

"It's all right," answered that damsel's vo ce; "just tell Mr. King what a good shot I am w th a revolver, girls. You know Ben taught me last holidays, and if he moves an inch I'm going to shoot at once. I can take a splendid steady aim from this bough."

Mr. King seemed to turn green before our eyes. He made a movement towards his room, but an ominous click from the screen above brought him to a stan still. I could see Susie's white dress and determin d little face and the glint of the weapon quite pla nly now.

"It's no use; I've got the axe and the other pistol-thing out of your room. I climbed in by the skylight, so you needn't go there," continued Susie. "If I fire once, the men will come over in a body, but I'm going to give you a chance. The black boy is bringing round your horse now, valise and all, and if you are sensible you will go before Jack is out with the police, for I sent word to him directly I got home."

I really felt almost sorry for the man, he looked so deadly frightened.

The loud voices had brought poor old Kenrick, white and shaking, to the scene, and the cook and housemaid were peering fearfully from the hall door. The small black boy rode up just then on Mr. King's horse, ready saddled for the journey.

"Now," said Susie, "go!"

And as he turned to obey her orders, she dropped lightly to the ground and covered him with the revolver. I never saw a man get on to a horse as quickly as that one did. He seemed more upset than even the strange circumstances warranted. Alice was sobbing in a frightened sort of way by the window, for she was unnerved and frightened. Mr. King dug his spurs into his horse, and made for the road which led to the river.

"Oh, shout for the men," I cried; "he may come back again. Oh, Susie, what does it all mean?"

Susie's little face was white enough as she answered:

"There isn't a man in the place but little Bundle and Mr. Kenrick. They had gone when I got to the stable; but I didn't want him to know. I don't think he will come back."

Her voice shook, and I took her in my arms.

"But how did you know? Why was he so frightened?" cried Alice.

"I told Bundle to bring his horse round," said Susie. "because I know he is hiding from something. I climbed into his room. You didn't know, I suppose, that he locked it again after he came home and took the key. Well, I got over the skylight and packed up his things, so that he should have no excuse to stay, and just accidentally I knocked the pillow down and saw the edge of our new axe sticking out from under the mattress. Then I found a loaded pistol-thing in his valise and I just skipped with them both. When he got into such a rage about the men not being gone (although they really were) I knew he must mean mischief. Probably he wanted the money you brought out, and he planned to get it to-night. Anyway, I knew we couldn't do anything until we got his revolver. I saw the end of it when I first spoke to him. He kept it always in his coat, and so I got it." And then, womanlike, Susie began to cry.

"Oh! you darling," I said, "I am so sorry I scolded you."

"I tol—told you s—so," wept Susie.

* * * * *

And, indeed, Susie had saved us from a great danger Jack arrived unexpectedly that afternoon with the police

The horse had absolutely refused to swim.

for word had been brought that "Charlie Cussen," a Rushy Creek stockman, who had murdered his mate, was at large, and although he had cleverly led the police on a wild-goose chase in an opposite direction, had gone back on his tracks and made down Willwanda way. He had been disappointed in the gold he had hoped to find on his victim, and had evidently intended getting over the border the day after he had come to our station. But overhearing our conversation about the ring-barker's money, his plans had changed; and if Susie had not been as sharp as she was athletic, things might have gone very badly with us. Poor old Kenrick, at any rate, would have been a dead man.

The murderer was a strange mixture of clumsiness, cunning, cheek, and cowardice, and we could hardly realise that the thick-skinned bore was really so dangerous a character. At any rate, his career was a short one, as the stolen Warrior colt was not a perfect horse for a man with his life in his hands; for when, hard pressed by the police, Cussen had put him at a flooded creek, the horse had absolutely refused to swim, and had been carried down with his rider to certain death at the old Willwanda crossing.

One comes across strange characters in the far bush; but the most unpleasant memory I have of anyone is that connected with "The Man who Came to Stay."

"Papa, if you hadn't married mamma——"

"Well?"

"What a lot o' fun me an' you could have—a-doin' as we please!"

Resident: "Thinking of commencing business, eh? Seems to me you're rather young for a family physician."

Young Doctor: "Yes, but—er—I shall only doctor children at first."

Maud: "I thought you did not believe in the theory of kissing?"

Marie: "I don't, as a theory. But there is a big difference between theory and practice."

Mutual Friend: "Madam, allow me to present my friend, Mr. Green."

"Excuse me, my name is Brown!"

Mutual Friend: "That makes no difference. Madam is aware that I'm colour blind."

"Papa, I know what makes some people laugh in their sleeves," said little Harry.

"Well, my son, what makes them?" asked the father.

"'Cause that's where their funny bone is," was the reply.

"The loom of Nature has woven another web!"—these were the words in which a sentimental schoolteacher named Webb published the fact that his wife had got a little boy. A man named Snow beat this, when he sent to the paper the announcement that "A little Snow drifted into my house last night."

Pastor: "You know, William, what a deal you have to be thankful for; you are blessed with health and strength, plenty of good things to eat, warm clothes, and a comfortable house to live in."

Blithesome Peasant: "Werry true, sir; but do you know sometimes I can't help thinkin' as 'ow I 'as it all took out ag'in in corns!"

They had had a tiff, and he was anxious to clear away the tram lines at the corners of her mouth.

"I see that dresses are to be worn longer than usual next season," he observed, glancing carelessly up from the pages of his morning paper.

"Well, if they are to be worn longer than I am compelled to wear mine they'll have to be made of sheet-iron," she replied, with a look that, he afterwards confided to a friend, fairly scorched him.

An old Scotch sexton possessed a guinea at a time when such coins were rare in Highland parishes. He used to exhibit the treasure as a curiosity on Sundays after the service, charging a "bawbee" for a peep. Hard times came, however, and the sexton was forced to spend the cherished coin. The next Sunday applicants came as usual to view it—but in vain. Suddenly a bright idea struck the old man.

"Here, lads!" he cried, "ye canna see the guinea, but ye shall see the purse that held it for a pinch of sneeshin."

An "Extra Turn."

In addition to the usual number of "artistes" nightly to be seen at the Pantheon Music-Hall, Whitechapel, the audience were accustomed to an "extra turn" appearing upon the stage now and then.

The "extra turn" at the Pantheon was mostly an aspirant to music-hall fame, and the audience generally expected that the latter would prove a failure.

This time their expectations were fully realised, for Mary Saunders—or Marie St. Clair as she called herself—certainly had proved one.

True she had not been given a very great chance of success.

In the first place, as she was in the middle of "making up," the call boy had appeared, and told her she was to follow the overture. The band was then just on the point of finishing up the overture, and she had barely time to put on her dress and fly down the stairs on to the stage. So that while one eye looked large, dark and langorous—with grease paint and indian ink—the other looked small and light—giving her the appearance of a lady charging her husband with assault at Bow Street.

Then again, she might perhaps have done a little better, if the workmen—who, were busily preparing the back of the stage for the "Sketch," had not made so much noise while she was singing. But, what with stage manager to right of her, limelight men to left of her, and scene shifters behind her—all volleying and thundering at one another—her girlish tones had but little opportunity of making themselves heard. Still, even these drawbacks could not do away with the fact that she was a failure.

The "descriptive" singer, who was watching her from the "wings"—and whose "descriptive" idea of herself was that she was England's unique and most valuable specimen of her kind—had said so and she ought to know.

She, the "extra turn," had seen Marie St. Cyr, the "star artiste" she so greatly admired—and whose name she had carefully copied—walk on to the stage, and bow repeatedly—in acknowledgement, of course, of loud cheers and applause. So she also—although without any provocation—walked down to the footlights, and bowed right and left a great many times. Several of the "gentleman" in the auditorium, evidently impressed by so much politeness, rose from their seats and bowed too.

She now commenced her song—quite oblivious of the fact that the band was still playing the symphony. The band at the Pantheon was not one of the best, and the musicians did not consider it necessary to spoil the effect of their own playing by hurrying up the symphony to catch up with the singing of an "extra turn," but endeavoured to drown the discord by a still more liberal use of trumpet and drum. And so, while they played merrily on in their own sweet way, she sang steadily on in hers. At the end of each verse she again bowed repeatedly, but now with more excuse, for the noise the people were making was deafening. The bowing especially seemed to take their fancy, for by this time the whole house rose as one man, and returned her salute. The fever of success was in her blood and she sang with an abandonment worthy of a better cause. Now she smiled coyly at her audience, now she winked archly at them, or shook her finger playfully at them—as she fancied the action of the song called for. And at last, with a great flourish of skirts, she finished up with the words, "So now you know the sort of girl I am"—the only words of the song, by the way, that the audience had heard at all—and bounded triumphantly off the stage to the accompaniment of roars of laughter and derisive shouts of "encore."

And then, the loud voiced "descriptive" lady marched down to the footlights, and the hearts of the roughs were moved to pity and many of them shed tears as, with much gesticulation, she told of the sorrows of the life of a "Pore orphan girl."

Perhaps they would not have laughed so loudly at the "extra turn" had they known her history—alas! it was only too common a one.

She had lost her mother six months ago, and had been left, with a little sister and brother, to take up the burden of making "both ends meet" that that tired mother had laid down.

At first Mary had thought of trying to get the little ones into an orphanage; but they were all she had left in the world, and had begged so hard not to be sent away from her, that she could not find it in her heart to part with them.

And so they had struggled on—living in one little room and existing on the pittance she earned at the factory. It was merely existing—the children counting themselves lucky when they could get as much bread and dripping as they wanted—but they had one another, and a small sum put by for a rainy day, and if the little mother sometimes went hungry to bed, her heart was full of love—and so she was happy.

Her idea of going on the stage came about in a very natural manner.

Her landlady, Mrs. Brown, kept a small green grocery shop, and exhibited bills of the Pantheon Music Hall on the wall outside.

In return for this, she often received orders and, on one or two occasions, had taken Mary with her to the Music Hall and, in glowing terms, had told her of the large salaries paid to the performers.

It all looked so simple and easy, and so little study seemed necessary, that finally Mary resolved to try her own luck—feeling convinced that she too could make a success.

She did not know that success meant the swagger and strut, the brazen advertisement that money alone could purchase; that "the race was to the swift, the battle to the strong;" that in that fierce combat all that was tender and pure and simple in life was as nothing.

No, she did not know these things—how should she? She felt that she had only to do her best, and she too would be given a chance—would be allowed to make her own little bid for fame and fortune.

She drew some money from the slender store entrusted

to her by her mother, and bought a song. She also took lessons in dancing, every evening after the day's work was over.

Then, a little more of the money had to go for some satin dancing slippers, and lace petticoats; and the tired child would sit up far into the night, working at a wonderful blue silk dress—and building her castles in the air.

What a labour of love it had been to make those infinitesimal little tucks, and to trim each with row upon row of lace; and how real an affection she felt for that shining robe—the fairy god-mother that was to transform her into a beautiful princess!

One day, when all was ready, she arrayed herself in this glistening garment, and with Cissie and Joey, and Mrs. Brown for an audience, went through her performance.

Cissie and Joey, had clapped their small hands with glee: and Mrs. Brown had predicted a great future for her.

Her preparations being now completed she went to see an agent, a Mr. Davis.

"You'll do all right, my dear," he had said in cheerful tones, after hearing her sing. "But you must get a couple more songs. You can't expect to get on to the stage with one song, and a song and dance." She had thought long and seriously before taking the last two pounds. Cissie's cough was very bad, she ought to see a doctor! And Joey wanted a pair of boots.

Ah, well! she would be able to make it up to those dear ones, tenfold, bye-and-bye. The agent's manner had been so reassuring, and she felt so confident of success.

And at last came one never-to-be-forgotten day—surely the happiest day she had ever known!—when Mr. Davis told her she was to appear at the Pantheon, as an "extra turn," on the following Monday evening, adding, "The manager is a great friend of mine, and I'll get him to keep you on for the rest of the week."

So she gave up her work at the factory,

"Ah! You'd soon be earning your twenty pounds a week," said Mrs. Brown, when Mary told her of her good fortune, "and then you'll be too grand to speak to the likes of such a shabby creature as me."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Brown," she answered, her face beaming with happiness, "I could never be too grand to speak to you," and in the excess of her joy, noticing that Mrs. Brown's dress really was very shabby, she gave her the black dress she had been in the habit of wearing when at work.

She was in the dressing-room, removing her "make up" when the manager came round to speak to her.

"Where's that Miss What's-her-name, the 'extra turn'?" said that gentleman—as without undue ceremony he popped his head in the door.

"Do you want me?" Mary answered timidly—although not without a slight look of pleasurable expectation.

"Want you? I want to know what you mean by making such an exhibition on my stage."

The pleased look faded from her face even sooner than it came.

"Wasn't it all right?" she faltered, with a curious little droop of her sensitive lower lip.

"All right? You must be mad if you don't know what a fool you've made of yourself. I shall write to Davis in the morning and ask him what he means by sending me such 'turns.'"

She did not answer but looked up at him with large, wondering eyes. The words had fallen upon her ears, although the meaning of them had not yet penetrated to her inner consciousness.

And then the truth dawned upon her—she had made an exhibition of herself. The shouts of the people had not been cheers; they had been jeering at her.

And yet she looked very young and fair—too young to fight the battle of life unaided; too fair for one so lonely and unprotected!

Standing there, in her tawdry raiment, she gave one the idea of a little girl, dutifully attending some Christmas pantomime and too young to understand it.

"Have you ever 'worked,' anywhere before?" asked one of the artists, looking at her curiously.

"No," she answered gravely, "this is my first appearance."

"And she can bet her life it'll be her last," laughed another.

"That song of yours 'went well,'" said a third.

"Ah! don't be unkind," now put in a stout, good-natured looking lady, who played the part of the heroine in the 'Sketch.' "Only think! praps the poor girl's been looking forward to being a success."

Mary paid no heed to the jests of the others, but went on wiping away the rouge from the childish whiteness of her skin.

The kindly remark of the stout lady had touched her deeply—had shown her the pathos of her position more plainly than she could have seen it herself.

In the distance the voice of the descriptive singer, dirging out its monotonous song, sounded like the chorus of her own despair—a wail for "days that are over, dreams that are done"

She took off the blue dress—that dress over whose silken folds she had dreamed her dreams of fame—smoothed out the frills of lace, and folded it tenderly. She took off the little satin slippers, and the white lace petticoats, and placed them carefully, by the side of the dress, in the basket; and ere she closed the lid, she gave them one last, loving look, as a mother might who shuts from her sight the little woollen shoe, or the soft baby gown, that to her are too human, and breathe of hopes that are passed, heartache that is ever present, and the future that might have been.

Her basket was placed on a cab and she was driven back—back to the old bare attic, and the old hard life.

The cab rattled down the narrow street, and stopped in front of the dingy shop. The night was bleak and foggy, and as Mary alighted, she felt that the outlook of her own life was of the same dull, cheerless grey.

She mechanically gave the cabman a shilling—the last in the shabby purse—then she went in.

The lamp in the passage was turned down, and a strong smell of cheap paraffin pervaded the house. She gathered up her basket in both arms, and groped her way up the dark stairs, to her own little room under the tiles.

Cissie, who had been waiting—all excitement to hear the news—ran to meet her and twined her arms lovingly round her neck

"Do tell me all about it, Mary. Did you look very lovely, and were the people—— Why, you're crying!"

Mary pressed her sister closer to her, and kissed the little eager face, but she only said, in a dull voice:

"Ask Mrs. Brown if she'll give me back my old dress. I must go down to the factory in the morning, and see if I can get taken on again."

C. C.

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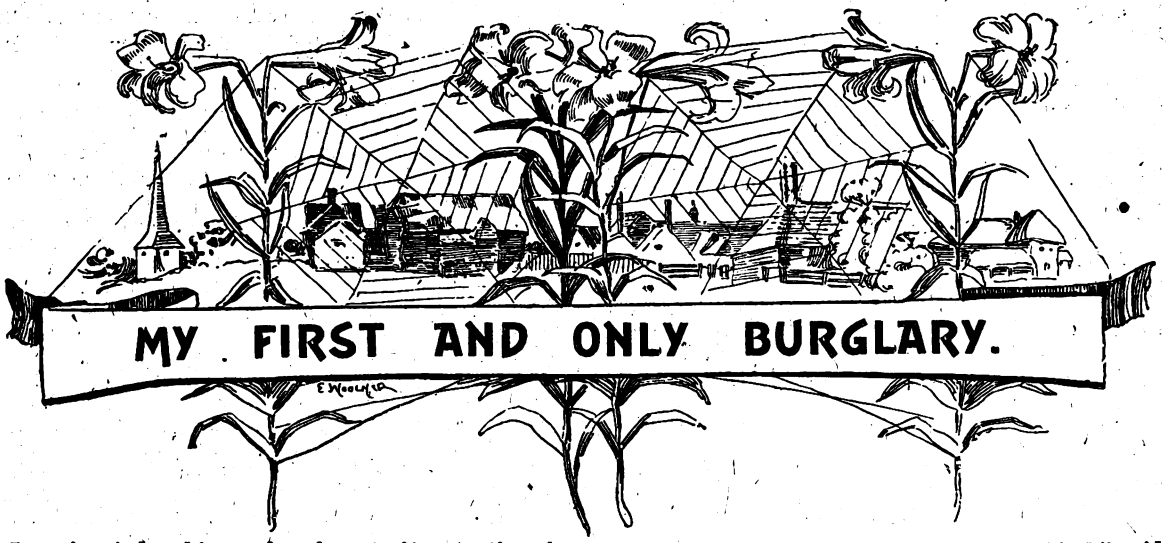

MY FIRST AND ONLY BURGLARY.

I DON'T mind making a clean breast of it now, though it was matter of strict silence with me for a long time; and the few friends who were acquainted with the facts maintained a considerate secrecy.

It grew out of what that vulgar Simpkins calls a "barney," at the Club. Doubleday, Wilson, Saunders and I were chatting over our cigars, and the conversation turned on burglaries; for it was the burglary season and the papers had recently teemed with tales of housebreaking. So far, the suburb in which the four of us resided had not been visited by any gang of thieves. But, then, as Doubleday said, "You never know when they might swoop down," and as Watson pessimistically suggested, "As they've left us alone so far, our turn will probably come before long."

Both of them stated that they had taken the precaution of investing in insurance policies against loss by burglary, and evidently prided themselves on their foresight. Saunders pooh-pooh'd the danger, and declared that he felt quite safe, for he was sure no one could effect an entrance into his house without disturbing himself or servants—even if old Pluto didn't make a meal of him first.

For my part, being single and in diggings, I might be supposed to have no practical interest in the subject. But I was a prospective householder—Maud's mother having at last yielded a tardy consent to our union in the not far distant future—and I was keen on all matters pertaining to domestic management. Indeed I seemed to be the keenest of the four, and even ventured to take Saunders to task for his reprehensible carelessness. As he rose to depart, he laughingly said:

"Well, when I'm visited in the night watches I'll send for you fellows—specially for you, Snaggles—to help to capture the thieves."

It was then that a brilliant idea struck me, the working out of which might, I thought, demonstrate to Saunders his unwisdom, and teach him a lesson in prudence.

"It would serve him right," I exclaimed, "if burglars did pay him a visit. Tell you what, let's do it! Get into his house and walk off with some of his valuables. Send 'em back afterwards—with a penitent letter from the supposed thief, you know."

Both Doubleday and Watson admitted the brilliancy of the idea, but fought shy of participation in the carrying out of it.

"Jolly well we should look if we were nabbed," said the former, "you don't catch me going in for any giddy goatish tricks of that sort. Burglary's a serious business, and even if we squared the police, if caught, we should be the laughing stock of the neighbourhood. I'm not on, old man."

Watson said it was a good notion of a joke—for a single man. In fact he wouldn't mind taking a hand in it if he were younger, but it was a bit too skittish for the father of a family. The "family," by the way, consists of one excessively small and red and squally infant—a very recent arrival. To hear him talk since its birth you'd think he had a dozen at least. The attractiveness of my idea grew on me, until I was fully persuaded that it was almost a duty to demonstrate to Saunders how easily he might become the prey of thieves.

"Don't know what it might save him from in the future, you know," I urged.

"Something in that," admitted Watson. "You play a lone hand in it, old chap, and get all the kudos."

"Bet he won't do it," sneered Doubleday.

Now if there's anything I hate it is to be suspected of lack of pluck or determination, and I replied hotly, "Bet you I do. I'll do it tomorrow night. What'll you have on it."

And, to make a long story short, I there and then undertook to break into the dwelling-house of our friend Saunders, and remove therefrom goods and chattels, to the shaking of his sense of security, Doubleday and Watson swearing the utmost secrecy.

I had often smiled at the want of caution and intelligence displayed in the clumsy methods of burglars in such stories of their doings as I had read, and determined to do my "little job" in style, and in a way to baffle discovery of the perpetrator. I therefore went to considerable pains to procure the necessary outfit, chuckling over Saunders' discomfiture to come.

The fateful night arrived, rather windy and very dark, just suited to my purpose, and shortly after midnight I stole forth on my quest. I had procured a suit of clothes in keeping with my errand, in order to avoid recognition in the unlikely event of being seen. For the same reason I took along a supply of burnt cork wherewith to smear my face before entering the house. Not that I had much fear of being unable to escape if disturbed at my "job," but I didn't particularly want to

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be recognised by anyone who might catch a glimpse of me.

Knowing Saunder' house and grounds as well as I did, it was with ease that I found my way round to the back of the premises. and selected a likely window. Meanwhile, I paid a visit to Pluto's kennel, thinking it would be an easy matter to settle the old dog, who knew me well. I had always regarded him as an intelligent animal, but it is astonishing what a fool a dog is in the dark.

He made a good deal of noise before he was assured of the identity of his present visitor with one of his reputable acquaintances.

Waiting awhile, lest Pluto's barking should have aroused the inmates—though trusting they would lay it to the account of prowling cats—at length I approached the selected window. feeling a good deal more nervous than I had bargained for.

There was no difficulty in forcing back the catch. "Careless beggar, Saunders," thought I, "not to even have the shutters closed." Once inside the house I became less and less in love with my task. The risk of discovery and the unpleasantness of it became more apparent. I found myself starting at the slightest noise that I made, and thinking how excessively foolish I should look if I were detected. However, the wager was on, and I was not going to back out.

Sneaking along the passage to Saunders' snuggery, where I knew he kept his swell collection of medals and coins, I found the cabinet unlocked. "The Juggins," I said to myself—though I should not have liked to be compelled to break open the doors—"why it's putting a premium on a moderate burglar's enterprise," and I annexed the lot.

A visit to the dining-room enabled me to add a "pot" or two, on the possession of which the owner rather prided himself—they being rewards of athletic prowess in his younger and slimmer days.

I didn't want a lot of goods, on account of the difficulty of porterage, but I took care to leave cupboard doors open, drawers pulled out, and things generally in a state of confusion.

Then I decamped, chuckling over my success in so easily winning the bet, and at the same time taking a rise out of Saunders. How taken back he would be in the morning, I thought.

Leaving the window open, as another sign of a burglar's visit, I slipped across the yard and down the shrubbery path to a point at which it was possible to drop over the wall into a side lane. Balancing myself a moment on the top of the wall, I dropped, and was received in the arms of someone who gruffly exclaimed, "Ah, got ye, have I? Better come quietly now."

To say that I was surprised is a very mild putting of my astonishment, and to declare that I was alarmed is to keep well within the truth.

But I had not played three-quarters at "Rugger" for nothing, and, dropping the bag that contained my "swag," and throwing up my arms and slipping suddenly downwards on to my knees. I was out of the policeman's grasp and had rolled over and was up and off before he realised what had happened.

I felt pretty sure of holding my own in running, and sprinted off down the lane.

But alas! The man blew a note on his whistle, and just as I turned a bend, I heard hurrying footsteps in advance, and ran full tilt into the arms of a second constable, who speedily convinced me that he knew the art of collaring only too well.

"No use yer strugglin'," panted he, and he was right.

Hurrying to his assistance, my first assailant grasped my collar, and I was helplessly "held."

Here was a pretty predicament! And as I argued and pleaded with the too watchful guardians of property, I realised with a sickening sense of horror how weak and unconvincing my presentments were. An attempt to get off at the cost of a fiver to each of my captors was met with indignant refusal.

"Note as 'e've attempted to bribe the police, Brown," growled No. 1, "that'll mean a hextry three months, that will."

In vain I assured them that I was a respectable person. "Yes, you look like it," sneered the one named Brown.

I fervently, but fruitlessly, declared that it was a joke, and done for a wager.

"Oh, yes," said No. 1, sardonically, "you'll find it a joke before you've done your time, I'll wager." And the brute laughed at his exceedingly poor joke. A more unbelieving, dense, and unfeeling couple of persons I never met, they were so utterly proof against all appeals to their intelligence and better feeling "You tell all that to his worship to-morrow morning," growled Brown.

By this time the extreme awkwardness of my position was painfully clear to me. Suppose—as seemed certain—these ruffians should insist on locking me up! And if the magistrate should be as hard of belief as these minions of the law! If Doubleday and Watson should decline to back me up, in order to keep out of the mess! For men are capable of anything. It was plain that I was in a very ugly fix. How devoutly I wished that I had left the miserable business alone! A burglary in joke is one thing in contemplation in the smoke room of a club, and quite another thing when in the grasp of two determined and incorruptible constables. How I reviled my folly.

"Better get 'im along, Brown," on the part of No. 1, almost destroyed all hope. In despair I entreated them to take me to the house which I had just quitted, that Saunders might identify me.

"Anyhow," said the inexorable No. 1, "it's our dooty to run ye in, even if Mr. Saunders should know ye—as is all a bit o' kid in my opinion—and shouldn't charge ye. Our dooty's plain; we caught ye in the hact."

However, renewing my entreaties, I induced them to yield so far as to take me to Saunders' door. It seemed an intolerable time before any response to Brown's vigorous knocking was forthcoming.

At length a window in the upper story opened, and a head was projected, with a "What's the row?"

"That's the groom," said No. 1, then into the upper air, "There's been a burglary here. We've got 'im. 'E says your gov'ner knows 'im."

A happy thought struck me; it might not be necessary to rouse Saunders at all, if not already roused.

"If that's the groom," I exclaimed, "he will know me." I had little doubt of being able to square the man afterwards, so as to ensure his silence. A light shone through the fan-light and the door was opened. Horrors! The opener was a stranger to me! "Says you'll know 'im." said No. 1. "He's a liar," promptly replied the groom, "and I hopes as you'll believe me. What do he mean by tryin' to take away a clap's character by sayin' as I knows the likes of him. I never set eyes on him afore—strike me dotty if I did. I only come to this place last Toosday. He's none of my pals, he ain't." And all hope from that quarter died

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out at the man's words, while the policemen's grasp tightened on me.

"I thought as much," remarked Brown grimly, "Better get him along to the station."

"Then," pleaded I, "for Heaven's sake, call Mr. Saunders."

"Wants 'is friend Mr. Saunders," sniggered No. 1.

In a few minu es Saunders came.

"Says you know him, sir," explained Brown.

Saunders looked at me fixedly, as I hoarsely said, "For Heaven's sake, Saunders, tell these idiots that you know me. I'll explain to you afterwards. Tell them that I am a friend of yours."

"Can't say that," responded Saunders freezingly. "It's of no use, my man."

Then turning to the policeman, he said, "Gross attempt at deception, officers. He is not known to me. The rascal is evidently trading on some slight likeness to one of my acquaintances. But the voice is different and the complexion is too dark. Besides my friend would never lower himself to housebreaking. Better lock him up. I suppose I shall be wanted at court in the morning? Good night." And I was haled away fuming at Saunders' want of recognition but most of all at my own f lly.

"Anybody else as knows ye 'ereabouts?" inquired No 1 sarcastically. There *was* another—of unimpeachable respectability and rectitude, and for a moment wild thoughts of appeal to her flashed across my mind. The mother of Maude! And I cried, "Yes." But Maude's mother, I remembered, had very strict notions of propriety. Her consent to our marriage had been grudgingly given and would certainly be revoked if she knew of any such escapade on my part as this. Besides, how would Maude feel about it? Her distress would be dreadful.

No, for Maude's sake—dear girl—I would not appeal to Mrs. Grundle. So having said "Yes," I followed it with "No."

"Ho," grinned No. 1. "You do, and you don't, eh?"

"First yes and then no; disgusting I call it," added Brown; "here, let's get along with him."

And then scouting my further suggestion that I should be allowed to appeal for guarantee of respectability to Doubleday and Watson, I was ignominiously lugged along by my captors, whose patience was evidently about exhausted.

A sympathetic burglar caught in the act may partly enter into my feelings at that moment—though he could not comprehend the depth of my chagrin. Nice result of an idiotic joke! Oh yes, it's easy to be wise after the event.

How I admired the superior wisdom of my two confidants in themselves keeping out of the mess—though I hated them at that moment for urging me on with their silly bets to make such an unspeakable exhibition of myself as I should cut in the dock in the morning. I could have wept with annoyance—and am not sure that I didn't. For I well knew that even if I could prove my innocence of real burglarious intention—of which I began to be seriously in doubt—I should be driven wild with the chaff of the Johnnies in my office. I could already hear their references to "the prisoner's appeal for mercy?" etc. While Maude—oh, Maude!—what would she think? And Maude's mother—what would she say? A cold shiver went down my back as I thought of the inevitable interview when—oh, horrid phrase—I "came out."

Was ever innocent mortal in such a hole? I was at that moment prepared to back myself as a first-class fool against the world—that was almost the worst of it. I had involved myself in the difficulty by my confounded folly.

By this time my captors had conducted me almost to the point of the lane's junction with the high road, and the horror of being haled through the streets in full view of any belated passers-by struck me. I besought my grim custodians to avoid publicity as much as possible, and to permit me to have a conveyance.

"No objection to that," assented Brown, "if one can be found at this time of night." Luckily a cab was discerned a little way down the road, where the driver had presumably been depositing a late fare, and much to my relief it proved to be available—the driver evidently being acquainted with the policeman.

After a short drive, with many turnings, the cab pulled up before large gates. On the latter being thrown open by No. 1, we were driven inside, and the gates were immediately closed behind us.

I was bundled out and hurried across the cobbled yard—being unable to discern anything clearly—and was ushered into a small room smelling of leather and blacking, it seemed to me.

When my eyes grew accustomed to the light I beheld standing in the middle of the floor, shaking with laughter—no other man than—Saunders. And at the instant No. 1 clapped me on the back, and exclaimed in a much less gruff voice than that in which he had before addressed me:

"Well, old man, what'll you have to drink?" Which Brown followed up with:

"I recommend Scotch, my boy." And snatching off helmets and false beards the two policemen stood revealed as—Doubleday and that immaculate "father of a family," Watson! I was wild; oh, yes, I was distinctly wild, but relief was the preponderating feeling. I was so exceedingly glad to be out of the difficulty that I bore the jest with a fairly good grace. They were eager to tell me how carefully they had worked the joke, in conjunction with Saunders, even to having the cab in readiness to take us round by back ways to Saunders' stable yard. How they trotted me, to be sure. Saunders declared that in getting into the house I had made noise enough to wake the dead, and that I was a clumsy sort of burglar. He said my endearments addressed to Pluto had almost moved him to tears. He had heard them from the window at which he was watching for my coming and from which he had signalled to his two confederates in the lane when I was departing with the booty, that they might intercept me at the proper time and place. I was bound to acknowledge that their little plant had been admirably carried out, and that I had unwittingly played into their hands by the very requests which I had made to them in their capacity as policemen. They never told me how they squared the real policemen on the beat, or where they procured their perfectly correct uniforms.

Half a sovereign to Saunders' new groom ensured his silence—though he never saw me afterwards without grinning—and I have no reason to doubt the honourable fulfilment of their promise of secrecy on the part of Saunders, Watson, and Doubleday. Said the latter as we separated for the night—or rather for the morning:

"Well, you won your bet, anyhow. And you know, old man, you said somebody ought to have a lesson on burglary. You've been the pupil this journey." Which I should be the last to deny. That is why it was my last burglary as well as my first. RALPH RODMAN.

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The Last Day is Coming!

In fact, it will be here next week. Therefore, don't delay filling up your coupons. It may make a difference of £1,000 to you. A few strokes of the pen and a penny stamp may bring you a small fortune. Anyway, it brought two people £500 each in the last competition. Closes next week. Don't delay. Enter Now.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in England and Wales for the week ending July 1st, 1899.

Then write down your name and address, and ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk from whom you obtained this copy of "*S.S.*" to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Newsagents and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£100,** and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £100 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, and the £5 for bookstall boys.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in England and Wales for the corresponding period during the past three years.

The figures published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending July 4th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending July 3rd, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending July 2nd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,372	3,691	7,115	3,106	6,575	3,203

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor,* Short Stories, *Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

This Competition closes on Wednesday, June 28th.

S. S.

My estimate is - { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

.....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," AND "PASTIMES."

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OUR LITTLE MISTAKE.

"WELL, there's no good in arguing, Jack. I say that the man who denies that the face is a reasonable index to the character, is either an ass, or a very vicious-looking fellow."

"Which am I?"

"An ass," I said.

"Is my face an index to my character?"

I did not quite know what to reply, for I could hardly say that Jack's face indicated any asinine qualities. He laughed.

"Joking apart," I said, endeavouring to get out of my difficulty by turning the point, "there is a great deal of truth in the theory. I have a very firm conviction on the point."

My friends say that it is one of my faults that I am always so cocksure.

"And I have a firm conviction that the theory is all rot. One of the saintliest men I know has a face you wouldn't hesitate to put down as that of a drunken prize-fighter."

"I question it," I said; "I'll agree that the features are not to be relied on. The mere features don't give any infallible rules. But the information they give, combined with that we get from the expression, is about as near infallible as any information can be. The eyes give the most valuable clue to a man's character."

"You are never in doubt as to whom you may trust, then, Will?"

"Never," I said, emphatically.

Marsden picked up a scrap of newspaper lying on the table, and glanced at it. There was a portrait on it.

"What sort of a fellow should you judge that to be?" he said, covering the reading matter with his hand, and holding the slip before me.

The face was that of a man in middle life. The brows were dark and heavy, the forehead low, nose broad and lips slightly protruding. You can't get much information from the eyes as they are shown in a newspaper print, but I did not like what I could see at all. I had no hesitation in pronouncing the man to be a criminal—very likely a murderer—certainly of a brutal, coarse nature.

"By Jove, you're right!" said Jack, "for once. It appears from this above that he is a man who's murdered his wife. The police are on the look-out for him everywhere."

"Don't say there's nothing in my profession again," said I.

Here our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the meal we had ordered.

Jack Marsden and I were spending our summer holidays together in making a cycling tour through the Eastern counties. It was one of the peculiar things about our companionship that we could never be together for half-an-hour without falling into an argument of one sort or another, and very often these arguments were so rancorous as to lead to temporary coolnesses between us. At the same time, there was no fellow I would as soon spend a day or two with as Jack, and I believe he would have confessed the same feeling with regard to me. We worked in the same office, we lunched at the same restaurant, we frequented the same club, and, in spite of our "incompatibility of temper" we were pals.

We had had a hard day of it that day, and both being thoroughly tired out, we had decided to spend the night at the little village of Clayton, where we found ourselves at about six o'clock. The roads had been bad, and the day sultry, and we were both of us glad to sit down in the cool, little snuggery of the "White Horse" Inn.

After tea, Marsden announced his intention of having a look round the place, and when he was gone I allowed myself to sink into a doze. I slept until about nine o'clock, when I was aroused by the clatter of knives and forks. The landlord was setting supper for a big man who sat at the other side of the room. I looked round for Jack, but he had not yet returned. I rose and lit my pipe—I always like a smoke last thing at night—and as I was lighting it I glanced round at the newcomer. He was very tall—over six feet I should think—and was dressed in a shooting coat and gaiters. His clothes—which were apparently of a very good quality—seemed to sit awkwardly upon him, and he did not seem to be at all at home.

To my surprise I found his face perfectly familiar to me. I seemed to know him thoroughly well, but I could not think who he was. I was surprised that he did not recognise me, but began to talk to me as one would to a stranger. We chatted for about half-an-hour, and then Marsden came in. I was dog-tired, so I went to bed and left him eating his supper.

I think it must have been about three o'clock in the morning when I awoke. The stranger had been very much on my mind when I went to sleep, for I had been puzzling a good deal as to who he could be. I think I must have been dreaming about him, too, for I certainly awoke with nothing else on my mind. Dawn was just breaking, and I lay awake, thinking lazily over yesterday's events, when a recollection flashed over me that made me spring up in bed. I knew who that man was! I knew where I had seen his face! It was his portrait that Jack had showed me in our dispute the previous evening. There was no doubt of it in my mind. The low forehead, the broad nose, the lips—I recognised them all. And when I remembered the awkwardness with which his clothes sat on him, I was still more confirmed in my opinion that he was a criminal in disguise. He was well disguised too, for, except that little awkwardness, he would have passed anywhere for a gentleman. How blind I had been not to recognise him before!

I sprang out of bed, and begun to dress myself nervously.

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A notorious murderer was in the house, I was sure of it. The man with whose name the papers were full was sleeping beneath the same roof. I was convinced that no time was to be lost.

Very likely the man intended to get off before the house was awakened, and it was already growing light. Fortunately I knew that Jack's room was next to mine, so I stole softly in and awoke him.

It was some minutes before I could get him to understand what I meant. When I did so he sprang out of bed with a bound.

"By Jove, Will," he cried, "you're right. I've been puzzling myself with just the same thing. What's to be done?"

"Did you see a police-station in the village?" I asked.

"No, there only seem to be twelve or thirteen houses. I'll tell you what, Will, you must run over to that little town we passed through yesterday—Drantwich, isn't it called?—and fetch a few men back with you, and I'll stop here and watch. You ought to be back by half-past four at the latest."

"Wouldn't it be as well to call the landlord?"

"Perhaps it would. The difficulty is, we don't know where he sleeps, and we might have to wake half the house, which wouldn't be wise."

"No, I think it will perhaps be better for me to go straight on, and when I come back there will be somebody up. And you can watch about in the lane, and prevent the man from getting away. By-the-bye, Jack, what's his name?"

"It's Tim Hooligan. He's an Irishman, of course."

"Well, I'm off. Keep a sharp look-out."

So saying, I stepped downstairs as softly as I could, and opened the door—the key was in the lock. I found my cycle where I had put it in the stable, and went out into the clear morning air.

It was about two miles to Drantwich, but it took me rather a long while to get there as it was nearly all uphill. It was a lovely morning, but no one was about to enjoy it. I did not meet a soul until I entered Drantwich.

I had very little difficulty in finding the policeman's house, which was also the police-station. I rung violently, and soon brought him to the door. He was a big, red-faced, sleepy-looking man, and I had a bit of difficulty in driving my story into his head, but when I did so he showed more alacrity.

"Just wait till I go and dress myself, and then we'll go and wake Jim Murphy. He often helps me when I've tough jobs on."

The man reappeared in a few minutes, and we went down the village street together. Jim Murphy swore a little under his breath at the way we had disturbed his slumbers, but was soon ready to accompany us. We set out together along the country road, I wheeling my machine whilst I narrated the whole incident to the two men. I felt very excited, I must confess, and also a little elated. I am afraid that I was not entirely free from conceit at the cute way in which I was managing things.

But what was my surprise, when about half-way to the inn, at meeting Marsden, walking slowly along in the middle of the road, and apparently in a very bad temper.

"You can go back," he said to the men, as he approached us.

"What's the matter? Has the man escaped?" I called out eagerly.

"No, the man's in bed—best place for a fellow this time of morning. The matter is, that we're a thundering pair of fools."

"Speak for yourself," I interrupted. "But we must not lose any time if the man's there."

"It's no use the police coming on at all," said Jack irritably. "I tell you the man is no more a murderer than I am."

"Do you mean he isn't the original of that picture."

"He is the original. But he isn't a murderer for all that."

"Explain yourself," I said, angrily. "Don't keep us standing here like idiots."

"Well, it's this way. When you had gone, I stood about in the lane, smoking, for about half-an-hour, and nothing happened. Then I bethought me to have a look at that paper, to make sure that it was all right. I went into the snuggery softly. The shutters were in, and the place was quite dark, so I struck a match. I found the paper, and looked at it. Here it is."

I glanced at it, and saw that it certainly was a portrait of the man we had come for. But I also saw that the name beneath the picture had been torn away. The print above, however, was a description of the murderer.

"Well?" I said impatiently.

"Well, I saw that it wasn't quite certain that this was a portrait of a murderer after all. I began to have some misgivings. I was standing thinking when that old fool of a landlord appeared at the door. He must have heard me strike the match. Evidently he thought I was a burglar, for before I could stop him, he had fired an old gun at me. It did not hit me, but it's broken a vase that was on the mantelpiece. So there's that to pay for."

"Never mind," I said eagerly. "Go on."

"I explained matters to the landlord, and he at once informed me who the gentleman upstairs was. He is Colonel Henderson, the member of Parliament for Drantwich division. I asked him if this was his portrait, and he replied:

"'Yes, it is. It came out in the *Eastshire Chronicle*.'

I don't know why the idiot should have laughed."

Neither do I. I have no patience with men who laugh at a little blunder like that we had made as though it was a good joke. I could have knocked those two policemen down.

We were very glad to get out of Clayton before the tale got abroad.

JESSIE WHITAKER.

AN Englishman shooting small game in Germany remarked to his host that there was a spice of danger in shooting in Africa.

"Ah," said the host, "you like danger mit your sport? Den you go out shooting mit me. De last dime I shoot mine bruder-in-law in de schtomack."

A WOMAN'S smile is thus described in a Hawaiian romance: "Her rich red lips parted, and there flashed upon the landscape two rows of beautiful white teeth. Slowly her mouth opened wider and wider; deeper grew the dimples in her bronze cheeks; brighter danced the sunbeams in her eyes, until a stray ray, darting through the foliage of an overhanging bough, illuminated the deep cavern of her mouth, bringing into view the back part of her head. Then, seeing us gazing intently upon her, she shut her mouth, and darkness fell upon the scene."

STORYETTES.

We propose to devote two pages of Short Stories to short, humourous stories, similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Miss Winifred Graham's novel, "When the Birds Begin to Sing," to each of the next best five. In the course of time we shall particularise these stories, that is to say, one week we shall ask for Anecdotes relating to Cricket, and another week Anecdotes relating to Bicycling. At present, however, jokes of any sort will do. All attempts for this week's prize must reach the Storyette Editor, Short Stories Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by Monday, June 26th. *Post-cards only, please.*

How Could He Mis-Spell.

A story is told of a politician, whose education was somewhat defective, and who was not a "born speller." He became prominent, and his correspondence, therefore, had a certain importance, One day a particular friend came to see him and said:

"Look here, William, you must have a secretary to write your letters, and never undertake to write any yourself."

"Why?" asked the public man.

"Because people are laughing at your letters, and they will do you harm."

"Why do they laugh at them?" in astonishment.

"Because you make so many mistakes in spelling."

"Mistakes in spelling!" exclaimed the great man. "Nonsense! I read my letters all over after I write them, and I never find a mis-spelled word."

She Told Him.

His arm, which had been resting on the back of the little settee on which they sat in the gloaming, slipped down and encircled her slender waist.

"Clara," he whispered, "we shall be very happy, sha'n't we?"

A soft sigh was her only audible response, but she nestled closer to him, and he appeared to be satisfied.

"Clara," he said, after a long pause, "we ought to have the clearest understanding about everything that affects our future, ought we not?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"Clara," he said again, after a long pause, "can you cook?"

There was another long pause.

Then she straightened herself up, looked him squarely in the eye, and proudly answered:

"Reginald, I can cook potatoes in fifteen different ways!"

Then she put her head down where it was before, and into her pink, shell-like ear he warbled incoherent outpourings of joy.

A Lively Bill of Fare.

It was a country hotel. The single stranger who sat down to dinner was amazed when the waiter handed him a printed bill of fare, which began with oyster soup and ran down to four kinds of fruit tart and chocolate ice cream.

"I'll take oyster soup," said the guest.

"Y-e-s, but we haven't got any," replied the waiter.

"Very well, give me some baked cod."

"We are out of that, too."

"Then bring me roast fowl and fried potatoes."

"We haven't got any of 'em, sir. All we've got is cold beef, b'iled 'taters, asparagus, and bread."

At that moment the landlord entered the room and the guest called out:

"Look here, landlord, what sort of trick do you call this?"

"What? Oh, that bill of fare? My dear sir, let me explain. My uncle kept a seaside hotel, and he failed. He had thirty thousand bills of fare on hand, and I bought them at a private sale for six shillings. These are hard times—ve y hard—and we must utilise everything, and keep up style at the same time, you know."

A Novel in Two Chapters.

Chapter I.

Some three moons ago a soulful-eyed young man was stepping out of the Theatre Royal vestibule when a timid, blushing little maid tripped up and lisped:

"Oh, sir, could you tell me the exact time? Papa was to have met me here, but he hasn't come, and I'm *so* afraid I shall miss the last train home."

Then there came the graceful uplifting of the young man's head gear; the noisy rattle of a passing cab; the faintest flash of a shining top-hat as the agile maid skipped in; the young man followed, and away drove the cab to the station.

Chapter II.

It was the first night of a new melodrama, and as a youthful, manly form strolled silently out from the theatre, a rustic-looking damsel came slowly up, and said:

"Oh, sir, could you tell me the exact time? Papa was to have met me here; but he hasn't come, and I'm *so* afraid I shall miss the last train home."

"That's all right," replied the neat young man; "but, if I remember rightly, you missed your papa about this very hour three months ago, and on the same date I missed my watch, a set of studs, and 27s. 6d. in silver, and was summoned by a cabby because I couldn't pay his fare. You caught your train with my assistance that time; I shall have to ask you to let this gentleman assist you to-night. Here, policeman——"

Slow music—curtain.

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Economy that Paid.

A NEW system of economy is said to have been discovered by a charitable gentleman. He noticed a poor man with a wooden leg one day walking past his hotel, and gave him a shilling. The next day he saw the supposed beggar, but he had changed the wooden leg from the right to the left leg. Enraged at the deception, he went up to the man and exclaimed:

"You rascal, you had the wooden leg on your other leg yesterday! You are not lame at all."

"Sir," was the response with dignity, "I never said I was. I wear a wooden leg for economy, so as not to wear out my trousers, and I change it to prevent one leg of the trousers wearing out before the other."

He Didn't Like Orations.

THE following little scene is authentic, and might, if necessary, be described with all due particulars of name and place: A prisoner at one of our criminal courts was convicted of an outrageous crime. The judge began to sentence him with the usual sermon in manner and form following:

Judge: "Prisoner at the bar, you stand convicted of a most abominable crime, one equally brutal and cowardly; you——"

Prisoner: "'Ow much?"

Judge: "Eight."

Whereupon, without more ado, the prisoner was removed, and the officer of the court recorded sentence of eight years' penal servitude.

How the Duke Managed It.

COUNT HERBERT VON BISMARCK, while staying with one of our English dukes some years ago, was being shown round the estate by his host, when they came across a house to which the duke pointed, saying:

"Ah! the tenant of that house has been a thorn in my side for many years. He is opposed to me in politics, and he always votes against me. But I've cured him at last."

"Indeed," said the visitor. "I see; you turned him out."

"Oh! no," said his noble host; "we don't do that sort of thing in this country. I simply lowered his rent a pound, and so deprived him of his vote."

A Crooked River, Indeed.

A CORRESPONDENT, in giving a description of the Rio Grande River, says: "Imagine four of the crookedest things in the world; then imagine four more twice as crooked; and then fancy yourself on a large river three times as crooked as these put together; and you have a faint idea of the crooked disposition of this terribly crooked river.

"There is no drift-wood in it, from the fact that it is so crooked that timber can't find its way far enough down to lodge two sticks together; but few eels, because it is not straight enough to swim in; and the fish are all in the whirlpools in the bends, because they can't find their way out.

"Birds frequently attempt to fly across the river, and light on the same side they start from, being deceived by the different crooks!"

He Made the Bells Ring.

RECENTLY, at one of our large hotels, while a party were holding an argument on the subject of spiritualism, a wag volunteered to express his belief that there was something in it, as he himself was a sort of "medium."

"How a medium?" inquired one of the speakers.

"Why," replied the wag, "I can do a good many mysterious things; for instance, I can make a bell ring without touching it."

The other offered to bet him he could not. The wag persisted, and said he would lay him five pounds he could make at least a dozen bells in the passage ring within two minutes, without leaving his seat.

"Done!" exclaimed the sceptic, and the money was staked. The wag turned round on his seat, opened a cupboard-door, and turned off the gas from the upper part of the building. In less than one minute half the bells in the passage began to ring violently, the persons above having suddenly lost their lights. And so the money was fairly won.

The Lost Fusee.

AFTER the races last week, a well-dressed man was seen groping on his hands and knees in the midst of a muddy road.

"What have you lost, sir? What is it?" asked the crowd, who assembled rapidly. The man only shook his head. But the crowd went in crowdfully, nevertheless, for the pursuit of the supposed diamond pin or roll of bank-notes. Operations were kept up vigorously for a quarter of an hour, the number of the searchers increasing every minute. At last, with a sad, dejected air, the man rose.

"Never mind," he said, "we shall never find it. It was my last fusee! Perhaps one of you fellows can give me one!"

Bought His Own Fish.

A YOUNG man, who was trout-fishing in the country, followed a brook with no success until it passed under a railing. He climbed the railing, and, as he cast his fly at the root of a willow-tree, he observed that a gaunt rustic was watching him. Finding, however, that he made no protest, the young man continued fishing, and presently he had seven fair trout in his basket. As he placed his foot on the lower rail to depart he was accosted by the countryman, who said grimly:

"Drap them trout!"

The young man hesitated.

"Drap 'em, or I'll drap you into the brook!" continued the countryman.

The young man then emptied the contents of his basket and climbed the railing, saying, as he reached the safe side:

"Well, I have met mean men, but, for generous, whole-souled meaness, you beat them all!"

"Hold on, young feller!" said the farmer. "I ain't mean. If I'd wanted to be mean I'd ha' stopped you fishin', or charged you half-a-crown for the chance. Now if you want to buy a nice string of fish, you can have 'em for a florin, and I reckon they're cheap at the price."

The young man paid the florin.

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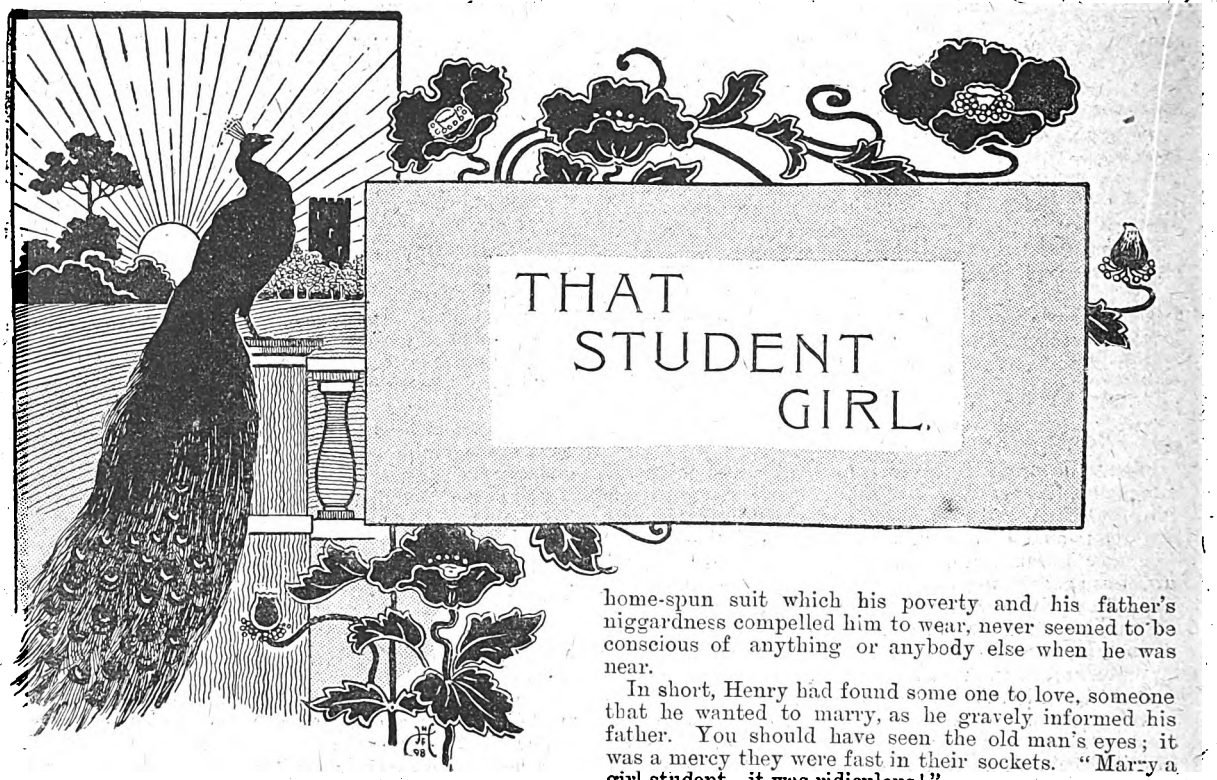

THAT STUDENT GIRL.

A CROTCHETY and contrary old chap was Dick Shellen a rich old farmer, as stubborn as a mule. He had made his way in the world by the doggedest obstinacy—seizing hold of whatever came in his way, and retaining hold, as though life depended upon it.

Shellen had one son—a handsome, clear-headed young man—straight as a young larch, tall and as tenacious in his way, when he chose to have one, as old Dick himself. This son, as he grew up, had proved a great assistance to his father in working the farm, and his services had been made the most of.

The old man managed to keep him at home with him some time after he ought to have been doing for himself. Not an acre of his father's possessions was ever called his son's; he owned nothing, save a horse, which some neighbour had given him when it was a sickly colt, and some sheep obtained in much the same manner; and the old man grudged him the keeping of these.

Shellen and his son differed often, but there were two points in which the difference amounted to something serious. The first point concerned education, for which the old man had the most profound contempt, and the son had not. There was a college some dozen miles from the Shellen farm, and thither—having thoroughly prepared himself in spite of fatherly thwarting and opposition—Henry betook himself, and by one contrivance and another, and helped by his mother's small marketing, kept himself there for several months.

The second point was not likely to be of so easy of arrangement.

At college Henry had found something besides scholastic honours. He had chanced upon a very charming combination of curls and azure eyes, a red-lipped, dimple-cheeked fairy, daughter of one of the professors who, instead of curving her dainty lip at the home-spun suit which his poverty and his father's niggardness compelled him to wear, never seemed to be conscious of anything or anybody else when he was near.

In short, Henry had found some one to love, someone that he wanted to marry, as he gravely informed his father. You should have seen the old man's eyes; it was a mercy they were fast in their sockets. "Marry a girl student—it was ridiculous!"

"And pray what harm is there in being a girl student?" questioned Bertha Halmstead, when Henry told her, half laughing, half vexed, and altogether rueful; for without assistance from his father he could not marry her for a long time yet.

Henry laughed again, but with some embarrassment, saying, "My father is afraid that a daughter of Professor Halmstead would not make a very good farmer's wife."

"Does he think—" Bertha hesitated, looking with smiling perplexity at her little white hands.

"That these pretty hands don't know much about baking, etc.? Exactly; I believe he thinks that."

"Then he thinks wrong," said Bertha, reddening and looking up at her lover with a comical little pout. "Didn't I hear you say you wanted a servant at home? I've a mind to go down and offer to take the place."

Henry laughed.

"We want one badly enough, but my father will not suffer one inside the house."

"Why, how do you live then? Who cooks for you now that your mother is ill?"

"We do our own cooking," Henry said, with a return of the half-smiling half-embarrassed expression. "We cook for ourselves or do without."

The very day succeeding the one which witnessed this conversation Henry was at home busying himself over some culinary operations, when the outside door, which stood ajar, was noiselessly pushed wide open, and a singularly-attired form presented itself on the threshold. It wore a red and green plaid dress, the checks very large, a yellow shawl and a very tumbled white bonnet. A red feather, nearly as long as his arm, streamed from one side.

The face, what could be seen of it, was a very curious

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one to be inside such a bonnet. Just now, as she surveyed the kitchen and Henry, herself unseen, the muscles about her mouth twitched nervously and her eyes twinkled with roguish brightness.

Presently Henry looked that way. Instantly the face took a lugubrious length, and coming into the room, the girl said hesitatingly, but without looking at him:

"An' would ye be afther enjoying a servant the day?" and stood fidgeting with the fringe of her shawl.

"I believe not," said Henry, colouring with some annoyance, perhaps, at the nature of his employment.

"Shure, sir, an' the lady that sint me said you'd be shure to take me on her recommendation, which I has in my pocket, and here 'tis now."

She gave him a note, which proved to be from Miss Halmstead. Henry read it with very lover-like carefulness, but shook his head.

"I'm very sorry, my good girl, but we do not wish to hire a servant."

"Belike your father mayn't object when he sees me," the girl persisted.

Henry looked at the soiled white hat and red feather and repressed a smile, wondering what his father would say. But he was of too kindly a nature to be willing to expose even this servant to his father's rough manner. He repeated what he had said before, assuring her that it would be of no use to see his father.

The girl stood a moment.

"If you plase, sir, I'll just see him a moment. Belike he may take a likin', to the look of me."

And before he could reply she had crossed the room and stood upon the threshold of the next. Henry followed presently, curious to see what kind of a reception she would get.

"Shure, an' I'll be worth a lot to yees," she was saying with innocent emphasis, as Henry entered.

She talked rapidly, pouring out such a torrent of words that the old man could not, by any possibility, slip one in among them, and sat regarding her with an expression of the most ludicrous astonishment.

This remarkable volubility completely baffled the old man's slowness.

He could not say a word now, if he wished to, and she concluded with "I can bake bread that'd bring the very eyes out iv yer head and make ye swally ye tongue with delight."

He could only twirl his thumbs in a sort of ridiculous awe, and asked her with a sudden smile how much she expected "to get for doing all these things."

The end of it was that her services were accepted and she began work at once.

Henry deliberated and furtively watched her. For some time she seemed unconscious of his scrutiny; but presently she turned, and clasping both her little hands upon the top of the broom-handle, said, with a mixture of bravado and archness too natural to be mistaken:

"Well, Henry, what do you think?"

The young man laughed and looked annoyed in the same breath.

"Then it is you, Bertha?" he said; "I was suspecting something of the sort."

"Not till I looked at you," said the girl roguishly retreating as he approached.

"Do you think it quite the thing, Bertha?"

"Shure, an' why ain't it the thing for a poor girl to be gettin' her living dacently and honestly?"

And that was all he could get out of her. Having acknowledged her identity with Bertha, for an instant, she was the most unapproachable Biddy the next, and would have nothing to say in that character.

"Does your father know of this, Bertha? What would he say?" persevered Henry.

"Shure, an' it's not me own fadder would be interferin' wid me, would he?" said Biddy.

In vain were all remonstrances with the roguish and wilful girl. She persisted in being Biddy, even to him, and maintained a distance between them very different from that between him and Bertha in her own proper self. Annoyed, provoked, chagrined, almost angry, the advent of his father forced him to retire from the kitchen, for fear of betraying her secret, which he would not have done for a good deal.

It was several hours before he could return to the house, his father having upon one pretext or another detained him.

When at last they entered together, kitchen and sitting-room, both of which had been in a most untidy state when they left there, had undergone such a remarkable renovating process that old Shellen drew back at first, thinking he had set foot in somebody else's house instead of his own.

Supper was smoking on the table; such a supper as old Shellen, at least, had not seen for months. To crown all, Mrs. Shellen was sitting propped up with pillows in a great easy chair, and looking wondrously contented, and with reason—the poor lady had not had a woman's hand about her before since her illness. They lived in such an isolated, inhospitable manner that very few of their neighbours even knew Mrs. Shellen was not as well as usual. Biddy, as she called herself, had tidied the poor lady up in a wonderful manner.

Shellen sat down to the daintily-spread table and made a most hearty and keenly-relished meal, glancing askance at Biddy meanwhile. Henry, strange to say, ate very little, and he watched Biddy askance, too.

This was only the beginning of reforms this darling girl instituted. First, however, for her own peace of mind as Henry's—knowing that mother and son were fast friends and always of one opinion—she told her secret to Mrs. Shellen, and fairly wheedled the good lady into approval.

It is true that she shook her head at first, and looked wondrously shocked. It was so charming to have those little soft hands fluttering about her, and to see such brightness and comfort spring up around, that she could not, for her own sake, help countenancing, as much as silence could, Biddy's mysterious presence.

Having made a good beginning, Biddy established herself in a short time completely in the good graces of the old man.

He had a lurking fondness for neatness and good order, and Mrs. Shellen, poor woman, wasn't a very tidy housekeeper. Under the new reign order grew out of chaos; the house seemed in holiday garb all the time, and an atmosphere of social cheerfulness pervaded everywhere.

One morning, Biddy had said something the day before, the old man ended a grumbling complaint of Henry's with "I never see no good come of eddication yet. If it hadn't been for that college business you might have taken a liking to a sensible girl, and she to you."

He glanced at Biddy as he spoke. She turned scarlet and came near dropping the dish she was holding. It was not the first time Henry had heard such insinuations, and he rather enjoyed Biddy's trepidation.

"Look here, father," he said, Henry smiling mali-

ciously, "just pick me out a wife, and see what will come of it."

"The only girl I know of worth having wouldn't have you, I dare say—would you Biddy?" Shellen said grumblingly, but suddenly turning to the girl, Bridget O'Flynn had kept Bertha's lover at a tantalizing and unrelenting distance all that time.

He was taking his revenge now. Making a desperate effort, Biddy rallied her confused senses to say, with considerable self-possession:—

"Shure, sir, an' it isn't myself that'll be after having any man till I'm asked?"

"Biddy, will you marry me?" said Henry, gravely extending his hand.

"I will that, now," said Biddy promptly putting her hand in his, while old Shellen came near choking himself with amazement.

It was too late to recede, however, whether he had really wished such a thing or not, as they soon made him understand. He went out of doors presently, privately pinching himself to ascertain if he were really in his senses or not. Seeing the two standing by the window in close conversation soon after, he crept with the same laudable intention towards them, under cover of the bushes that grew by the house.

"Now, Bertha," Henry was saying laughingly, "what is to be done next? I must say you have managed wonderfully so far; but what do you suppose he'll say when he knows you're not Biddy at all?"

"Not Biddy at all?" screamed Shellen, struck with a sudden suspicion of he knew not what, as he started out of his covert.

There stood Biddy, the white frill of her close cap as immense as ever. She laughed, though, when she saw him, and deliberately taking off her cap, shook her bright curls all about her face, and reaching toward him her little hand, said:—

"Shure, sir, an' ye won't be afther hating a poor girl because her name's Bertha Halmstead instead of Biddy O' Flynn?"

"You—you Professor Halmstead's girl?"

"Professor Halmstead is my father," said Bertha in her natural voice.

"What's that?"

Bertha repeated it.

"And you're not Irish?"

"Niver a bit!"

The old man stood a moment, clouds gathering in his face.

"Well Henry," he said, rather saucily, "you have outwitted me again; much good may it do you. You'd better get out the horses now, and take Halmstead's girl home. He must want to see her by this time."

"Yes, sir." And Henry coloured with mingled anger and amazement.

Bertha did not change countenance, however. Extending that pretty hand of hers again, she said sweetly:

"You'll shake hands with me, sir?"

Shellen turned back and gave his hand awkwardly. The girl took it in both hers, bending her bright arch face towards him, saying:

"I shall come back some time, sir. Will you be glad to see me?"

Shellen hummed and hawed, and stammered out at last:—

"Ye-es; come back, Biddy—I mean Miss O'Flynn—I mean Miss—"

"Bertha," suggested the girl quietly.

"Yes, come back; and the sooner the better. There, Henry, make the most on't!"

Bertha did come back, in a very few weeks, too, and nobody was gladder to see her than old Shellen, though he was a little shy at first of Professor Halmstead's girl. She soon made him forget everything save that she was Henry's wife; and the way he humoured the sly puss to sundry grants of money, refurnishing, and repairing, I couldn't begin to tell.

ROGER THAMES.

THE BEST BARGAIN.

THE Dexters were noted as a family for their shrewdness, and Squire Dexter was proud of it. He called it foresight which enables him to get much for little, and he was elated when he saw the same trait creep out now and then in Don and Aleck, his sons.

Not that the Dexters were dishonest as the world defines dishonesty; the squire would not have done anything that he thought dishonourable, but he had a knack of getting the best of a bargain.

For various reasons Squire Dexter did not keep a horse, which was a sore vexation to the boys. Doll was Mr. Dick's horse, a clean-limbed young chestnut which the squire liked to drive. As he frequently hired the animal, he thought himself quite a benefactor to poor Mr. Dick.

Mr. Dick had not made such a success financially as had the squire. He was a simple, straightforward old man, who had seen nearly all his property slip through his fingers in his dealings with those sharper than himself. The squire said this was due to a lack of business qualifications, and he privately expressed the opinion that the old man should not keep a horse, since he could hardly provide himself and wife with necessaries.

But old Mr. Dick clung to his horse, and as no one except the Dexter boys had evinced much desire to own it, he had encountered no great temptation to part with it.

Now the temptation had come in the form of bodily needs. The old man shivered in his thin clothes that morning as he curried Doll.

"After Doll again?" he asked, with an abortive attempt to cease shivering as the boys rushed into the stable.

"Yes, sir," answered Aleck.

"Your father's getting pretty fond of Doll," said Mr. Dick, giving a last touch to her mane. "I don't see why he don't have a horse."

"Nor I," said Don, impulsively.

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"He might buy Doll," said the old man, slowly.

Don and Aleck exchanged glances. Don slipped on the bridle before he put the question that was crowding for utterance: "Would you sell her?"

"I've seen the time I wouldn't, but it's different now," said Mr. Dick sadly. "I'm getting old, and—and I want the money."

The boys knew what this meant. Last week there had been a rumour that the Dicks would be asking for parochial relief this winter.

"How much will you take for Doll?" asked Aleck.

"It don't seem as if £20 ought to be too much. Doll's got good blood in her—but I do need the money," the old man sighed.

"Will you give father the refusal until to-morrow?" It was Don who put this question. He could not await Aleck's more deliberate speech.

"I'd rather your family should have her. You know how to use a horse, and you like Doll," partly mused the old man.

The squire had told the boys to put Doll to the carriage before bringing her up the lane to the house door, but they could hardly wait to do this, so eager were they to tell the news.

"It's what I call a bargain," said Don emphatically, as he jumped into the carriage.

"Yes," assented Aleck, "father supposed old Dick would want £30 for her."

"Well, Uncle Jack will think it cheap. He paid £200 for a pair and said neither one was any better than Doll."

Soon they were at the gate where Squire Dexter and his brother were standing.

Don screamed out first. "We've struck such a bargain, father!"

Then the two, as they tumbled out of the vehicle, poured out an excited account of their call on the old man. Squire Dexter turned to his brother with a laugh.

"They're Dexters, Jack, through and through. Know a good thing when they see it."

"And will you take her, father?" said Don, as the squire and his brother got into the vehicle.

"We'll see. Uncle Jack will test her."

It was noon before the two men returned.

Jack Dexter was a good judge of horseflesh, and the animal had been closely scrutinized in every particular. As he stepped out of the carriage the eager boys heard him say: "I'd clinch it at once. She'll sell in the market for £50 at least, with that style and action. Sound as a rock, too. I'll find a buyer at that price any day. I'll give you £40 myself.

"Whew, but did you hear that?"

Don whistled ecstatically, and gave Aleck a punch in the ribs that sent him headlong into the empty carriage as they got in to take the mare home.

"I should say I did," grumbled Aleck, rubbing his side. "But it won't do a fellow any good with his ribs smashed."

"We mustn't look too delighted," cautioned Aleck. "Old Dick may repent when we tell him father will come to see him about Doll."

"No he won't. He isn't that kind. He's as straight as a dart, if he is poor. You know father has said more than once that he wouldn't have been so poor if he hadn't been so straight. He's a good old man, and it's a pity he and old Mrs. Dick 've got to come down to the workhouse." Don flicked a bit of hay out of Doll's tail. "And even £20 won't go far to keep them out very long."

"That's true," replied Aleck; "but I'm glad we've got the chance to get the horse as long as he had to sell her, though I'm sorry for them."

Mr. Dick was looking for the return of the horse and met them at the gate. The boys said nothing, according to Aleck's suggestion. But the old man betrayed his anxiety.

"Did you speak to your father about Doll?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Dick. Father 'll be across to see you."

"I wouldn't be in any hurry, only it's all I can depend on for winter," said the old man. "I'd like to get in coal before the price rises, and there's Doctor Smith's bill—he won't like to wait long, and Mrs. Dick's apt to have him any time with her rheumatism—and some flannels for her and then the living."

"Father'll let you know before the time's up," answered Aleck.

"The poor old man has got the price whittled down pretty close," observed Don, as he swung the hitching-strap against the gate-post in turning into the street. It was Don's habit to hit things when he was thinking hard.

"He'd cut it still more, I suppose," Aleck rather curtly replied, "but he wants an overcoat."

Nothing more was said. They hurried in to the dinner table, where the family were already gathered. Jack Dexter was reviewing the horse's fine points, and the squire was in a very jubilant mood. Mrs. Dexter, who had smiled indulgently when Don and Aleck had announced the news to her, now sat silently listening.

After dinner she followed the squire into the hall. "Are you going to buy the horse?" she asked timidly, as she helped him into his ulster.

"I think so."

"But can you afford it?" she ventured, with still more diffidence, for Mrs. Dexter did not often inquire into any of her husband's business.

"Why, you heard Jack," Squire Dexter replied, with a look of surprise. "I can make a good sum. He'll guarantee me a buyer."

"But I thought perhaps you couldn't afford it," she repeated, with gentle insistance, brushing off a bit of mud from the garment and avoiding his eyes.

"H—m," said the squire. He pulled on his gloves and joined his brother without reply.

The boys standing in the door looked puzzled. They followed their father and uncle down the road to Mr. Dick's, while Uncle Jack kept up a one-sided conversation, not seeming to notice that the others were unusually quiet. They found the old man in the stable.

"Stays about Doll all the time now," observed Aleck, as he and Don stopped at the door while their father went in.

Jack Dexter walked up and down outside smoking his cigar.

The squire chatted a few moments on various topics, noting involuntarily as he did so how rapidly the old man was ageing. He felt impelled to say, kindly: "We're all getting on in years, Mr. Dick."

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," said the old man, with assumed cheerfulness and an attempt at a smile. "It's all I am getting on in, squire." Then, quickly, as if fearing his visitor was avoiding the important subject. "The boys told you I wanted to sell Doll?"

"Yes, they said so," The squire's tone was perfectly non-committal.

"I do hope you'll take her, squire." Mr. Dick stopped

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before the manger with a scant forkful of hay. "The boys want her, and I do need the money very much just now, squire."

The squire saw the whithered hands tremble, and he felt that it was not from the weight they were holding.

"It'd go hard to go to the poorhouse this winter," sighed the old man. "Perhaps my wife and I won't be here to worry about another winter. Don't say you can't afford it!"

"H—m."

The squire wrinkled his brows, turned on his heel and walked to the door. The boys stepped back and watched him. He looked towards the old house beyond. Mrs. Dick, scantily clothed, was emptying a wash-tub of water. She looked up, saw him and bowed.

The squire raised his hat gravely. The grey-haired woman reminded him of his own mother, dead but a few years. His mother had every comfort, he thought, gladly. It was a shame for old Mrs. Dick to be so poorly provided for as she was. How those two old people would fare and feel in the workhouse! Then his mind ran to the horse. Could he afford the bargain before him? He understood well what his wife had meant.

"Pshaw!" He uttered the impatient exclamation aloud. "The bargain was Dick's own making," thought the squire. "I'm not bound to tell the old man he is letting his horse go far below its value. Or am I?"

The squire grew angry with himself that he should allow such a query to confront him.

"'Taint the money," just then Don observed in an audible to Aleck, giving the stable door a kick as he spoke.

The boys had let nothing escape them. Don had been reading his father's thoughts. The kick called Squire Dexter back to the present. He looked up at the boys. His sons were sharp like himself, he reflected. Could he afford it? He determined to shift the responsibility of the bargain upon the boys. They should decide. As he turned to speak, the old man quavered behind him. The hesitation had worried him.

"I thought it was a good bargain, squire. I'll have to sell her. I might take——"

he squire had whispered to his boys: "I could get the horse for £16. She is worth £50. Shall I beat him down? I l ave it to you."

"But, father," interposed Don, with a frown, "would that be just right when we took the refusal at £20?"

"And he's got lots of things to get," said Aleck.

"I say he ought to get what's right," said Don stoutly, and Aleck nodded a vigorous assent.

"Mr. Dick!" The squire pulled his coat about him and wheeled upon the old man. "I'm sorry to say that I can't afford the price." The peremptory tone made old Mr. Dick shrink.

"Jack!" The squire turned back to the door. "Come here!"

Jack Dexter had thought it best not to be seen in the transaction. He was used to bargaining, and he thought the sight of a stranger might raise the price. He did not know what kind of a man Mr. Dick was. Then he had wanted to enjoy his cigar. But he, too, had been observing some of the very things the squire had observed, and the cigar had lost its flavour.

He threw it aside in disgust as he stepped inside at his brother's call and saw the white-haired, bent, shabby old man trying to hide disappointment in unnecessary attentions to the animal in the stall.

"This is my brother, Mr. Dick." The squire's tone was cool and even. The old man raised his faded misty eyes and bowed silently. "He'll make you an offer for your horse."

Jack Dexter looked in surprise at his brother. "Not going to buy it yourself?" he asked.

"We can't afford it." The squire made a comprehensive gesture that took in the wondering boys, Mr. Dick and himself. "Make him the offer you made me."

Jack Dexter raised his shaggy eyebrows, glanced at the boys, who were staring straight into their father's eyes, looked once more at his brother, took hold of his own coat-collar and shook himself up. "Mr. Dick, I'll buy your horse for £40."

"What?" the old man gasped.

"I suppose I can add £10 on my own account," said Jack Dexter, coolly, nodding sturdily back at his brother and then laughingly as he saw old Mr. Dick clinging, trembling, to the manger. "That'll make £50. That is what your horse is worth."

"And I could not afford to give what she is worth," said the squire, recovering his most matter-of-fact manner

The Dexters were prompt to act when a decision was reached. A cheque was drawn on the spot, while the squire tried to ward off the broken thanks that Mr. Dick attempted to utter.

"No workhouse, no workhouse," he murmured again and again, causing both men to shuffle about uneasily, and sending Don and Aleck outside for a violent wrestling-match by way of concealing their emotion.

"You'll have a horse when I can afford it," the squire simply said to the boys as the two men came out to find them thus joyously engaged, and to send them back for Doll. He knew that his sons understood.

"I'm glad a Dexter's got him," reiterated old Dick, his bent form straightened up, his eyes beaming, as he stepped quickly about, making preparations for Doll's departure. "It ain't so hard to let her go now. Oh, but it's what a man takes with him when he makes a bargain that shows his religion. You should be proud of your father, boys."

"We are," Don promptly answered, elevating his chin proudly. "It's better than even having Doll our own selves."

But Aleck could not refrain from a boast at the tea table. "I tell you," said he, "it takes a Dexter to make a bargain, though, and this is the best one yet."

The squire looked across at his wife, and she smiled with loving approval. James Bradford.

A French scientist says that insects are unable to distinguish one object from another by its outward shape. The bald-headed man knows better.

A man, courting a young woman, was interrogated by her father as to his occupation.

"I am a paper-hanger on a large scale," he replied.

He married the girl and turned out to be a bill-sticker.

"Get out of the way, can't you?" said a crusty old fellow to a tramp who was encumbering the pavement.

"Yes, sir; but couldn't you do me one small favour?"

"No; I haven't time to bother with you."

"But it ain't much. All I want is for you to take this razor and cut my throat."

"And have you buried at the public expense? Not much. I'm a ratepayer, I am. Get out!"

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.. From Prairie and Backwoods. ..

XIII.—A Run from Apaches.

AS RELATED BY AN OVERLAND STAGE PASSENGER.

Up to about a dozen years ago, when far-western communities became quiet, and the Indian question fell into abeyance, of tourists who crossed the plains nine out of ten were more interested in accounts of "bad" Indians and "bad" white men than in any other topics suggested by the surroundings—rattlesnakes and grizzly bear-hunting taking, respectively, second and third place.

There was a shade more of creepiness in the Indian than in the white desperado stories, owing to the impartiality of the red man in his killing among the whites, his subtleness and his infernal cruelty to captives. In a railway car, anywhere between the Missouri river and the Pacific, let an "old-timer" be drawn into talking of experiences with hostile Indians and quickly he would be the centre of a listening group, all eager to hear and to question him concerning the red Ishmaelites of the western plains and mountains.

"How does it seem to be in a fight with Indians? How do they make their attacks?" would be questions often asked the narrator, and to the second question the answer would be:

"That is what any hunter, or ranchman, or waggon-master on the plains, when Indians were roaming at large, would have given his boots to know. Any man that outlives an Indian fight can tell how they did attack, but no man living can tell how they will come another time.

"The only thing about it that's certain is that it will be in a way you never counted on and at a time you least expected it."

"I travelled for five years by stage and buckboard in Texas and New Mexico without seeing a hostile Indian," said a commercial traveller. "It was in the early seventies, when the Comanches and Apaches were bad in those regions. I was constantly hearing of their doings—of fights with the soldiers, massacres of settlers, and captures of stage-coaches—but having gone so long without running upon them, I began to feel that it would always be that way, and ceased to think much about them.

"It was in September, 1877, that I was travelling on the overland stage coach southward, and was crossing the Jornada by day.

"The Jornada means, in its full name, journey of death, so you can judge from the title the attractions of that piece of country. It is an open plain, stretching from the Rio Grande eastward to the San Andreas Mountains, and the stage trail crossed it in order to cut off a great bend of the river.

"In the seventy miles of desert trail there was but one place where water was to be found—at Martin's Well, a stage station midway in the desert. At the other stage stations the water had to be hauled.

"The overland company at that time had put in three-seated buckboards in place of their covered coaches. There were six passengers on the buckboard this day—four men and a woman with her child, going to her husband at Silver City—and I sat in the seat with Hank Barstow, who was driving.

"Four fine road mules made the buckboard spin, and the weather being fine, we were all feeling well.

"We had taken dinner at Martin's Well, and now, at about half-past two in the afternoon, had passed Point of Roads, and were about six miles on our way to the next station.

"Not a man or beast had we seen on all the wide plain since we left Martin's Well. Off to the east the plain rose in a long swell to a summit about two miles away. In the crystal air of New Mexico one could see everything as clearly at that distance as he would at a quarter of a mile away from the sea level.

"A dark spot came up in view from behind the summit and it rose, lengthening, until I saw that it was a man on horseback. He turned and waved his arm, and I saw others rising into view behind the crest. Then I nudged Barstow, but he already was looking at the horsemen out of the corner of his eye, and he quickened the pace of the mules.

"'Mescalaros,' he said, in an undertone, without turning his head. 'It's a run for our lives now. Better get out your gun if you've got one.'

"My revolver was in the bag at my feet. By the time I had got it out and found that it was in working order, with all the chambers loaded, the horsemen were coming over the summit and speeding down the slope towards us.

"I counted twenty-three when they had all come into view. They were Indians, as could be told by the way they rode. As they came nearer I could distinguish the leggings and calico jumpers that they wore and the bands of red cloth wound round their heads. All carried rifles in their hands.

"As they came down the slope their line kept spreading out, fan-shaped, so that while some were riding in a direction to hit the buckboard, others were making a long reach ahead, trying to cut us off in front.

"Then one of the other passengers caught sight of the horsemen and yelled 'Injuns!' and the excitement on the buckboard began.

"Two of the men, tourists from the east, started upon their seats, shouting to the driver to hurry the mules. The third man, an old-timer in the country, pulled a revolver from his hip pocket, twirled its cylinder and said nothing.

"The woman gave one loud shriek—she had far more to dread than any of the rest of us—then, as her child began to cry, turned to soothe it, speaking cheeringly, with her cheeks as white as chalk.

"The mules were already galloping. The Indians had shortened the distance one-half between us, and Hank Barstow began to use the whip—and language. A mild-spoken man in general, his eloquence rose to the occasion.

"The mules understood him and ran like deer. For half-an-hour it was nobody's race, with the Indians coming so near that they began to fire on us from their saddles. Then we began to draw away from those behind, with five or six Apaches galloping abreast of us half a mile away.

"We were beginning to feel hopeful, in spite of the bullets that zipped about us and threw up dust on the trail, when we heard the sound of a bullet striking, and the right lead mule dropped flat in his tracks, stopping the buckboard so suddenly that we were almost thrown over the dashboard.

"The Indians raised a yell of triumph as they spurred toward us. All seemed lost with us, but Hank Bristow, handing me the reins, sprang to the ground, opening his pocketknife as he ran round to the right mule's head. With my revolver in hand I was calculating how soon I had better begin to use it.

"'Save a shot for the woman when it comes to the last,' Bristow called, as he stooped to cut the harness from the fallen mule.

"But the mule struggled and came to his feet as light as a cat, shaking his head and working his ears as if at a loss to understand what all the delay was about. The bullet, a spent one, had struck his head-stall below the ear hard enough to knock him down, and nothing worse.

"Barstow leapt back to his seat and set the mules flying again, the right leader setting the pace for the others.

"The Indians had gained upon us during the delay, and were firing at short range; twice their bullets chipped the buckboard, and a mule might be disabled at any moment.

"Suddenly out of a gulch fifty yards to our right a horseman rode, a man wearing the United States cavalry uniform. A line of mounted men followed him, and instantly deployed on the level plain. We heard the charge sounded from the bugle, and as the line of cavalry swept towards them, the Indians turned and ran.

"The cavalry rode past us in pursuit of the Indians, and the buckboard went on to the station.

"All that I ever found out about the troop that had come to our assistance was that it was a scouting party—a half company—of cavalry that had crossed the Rio Grande that day, and had come upon the Jornada just in time to rescue us."

XIV.—DOWN ON RED HAIR.

SEVERAL of us were standing in the street opposite the saloon, talking about the last hold-up and how Jake Rawlings had made a nice haul and got clear away, only to be caught a little later, and suffer the usual penalty. We casually noticed a man looking cautiously into the bar, but as we were busy with our conversation we paid no attention to him. A few seconds afterwards our talk was interrupted quite unexpectedly.

We heard a shot fired across the street, followed by a rush of men along board-walks, and went over to find a man lying on the floor of a saloon with a bullet in his side. The bar-tender stood behind the bar with a smoking pistol in his hand, and he was the coolest one in the whole crowd.

He was an old hand at bar-tending in a rough neighbourhood, was Jim, and one of the prettiest handlers of a six-shooter that it has been my lot to tumble across; and I've seen some sport in that way during my time. We were pretty well used to incidents of that kind, yet we all felt just a little excited—except Jim. If we had been in the saloon when it took place, we should have been more calm, but as we hadn't seen the play we felt curious.

"Jim, how did it happen?" demanded the town marshal, who was immediately on hand with two of his deputies.

"The usual way; just the usual way, Tom," was the bland reply. "You've known me for two years and you know I never take a mean advantage of anybody."

"That's so; you've always played fair. I wonder who he is?"

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"Dunno. He was in here yesterday for the first time."

The marshal went over to the man, propped his head up on an overturned chair and examined the wound. The stranger's eyes were open and full of intelligence, and as he looked round on the crowd a faint smile passed over his face. He was a typical border man—rough in dress, rude of speech, and ugly of visage.

As we looked as the stranger, some of us remembered seeing him on the day before. He had come into the place with the appearance of a man who had travelled some distance and done it in a hurry. I remembered thinking that perhaps he had been in some risky piece of business and had found it advisable to shift his quarters without loss of time. But as we occasionally had strangers of his kidney come to the town, and leave again just as suddenly, I didn't worry myself about him.

He chuckled and smiled as he glanced over at the bar-tender. Then he quietly said:

"Look at his ha'r—the colour of it! I've been hunting that colour for the last two years. He'd a made my tenth."

The bar-tender's hair was red.

There wasn't any chance of a doubt about that; Jim's hair was the nearest approach to a danger signal that a human head could get. Not that the colour of a man's hair makes any difference to him, except to bring down upon him a lot of good-humoured joking if it happens to be out-of-the-way in colour or otherwise. We had often joked Jim about it, of course, and he had taken it all in good part; but we didn't expect to see a man with a hole in his body smiling at the bar-tender's wool. What did it mean?

"I heard about him a hundred miles away," resumed the stranger, "and I cum here to wipe him out. Hain't nuthin' agin him that I knows of except his ha'r."

"Then you meant to kill him?" asked the marshal.

"Sartin. A red-headed man got my wife run off with him, and I'm down on that sort o' ha'r ever since. I wanted to give him a show, though, and so I whooped as I started to draw. Gun got tangled, and he got the drop of me. He plugged me plumb centre, and I'm a goner."

The man said it easily enough, like a gambler of long experience who has staked his all—and lost. He looked round at the fellows assembled in the saloon, as though in search of somebody, and we saw him make a movement with his right hand.

"What's this?" said the officer, as he moved the man's body so as to uncover his right hand, which grasped his shotter.

"I—I didn't git it out in time fur the bar-tender, and so I was layin' low fur somebody else. Is there a red-headed man in the crowd?"

"No," answered the marshal, as he looked from one to another.

"If thar war I'd try a pop at him. But I've run up agin a barbed wire fence."

"That's so" replied the town marshal. "It's about certain that you won't do any more shooting in this world."

"I'd like to ha' done a dozen of 'em with red ha'r," sighed the wounded man. "It would sorter comforted me if I'd wiped out a dozen. You're sure ther ain't no red-ha'red man in the crowd?"

"Certain," rejoined the town marshal, humouring him. "Better let me have that shooter of yours."

Reluctantly the stranger gave it up, and the town marshal put it away. The man was getting weak and his eyes closed.

"Where's the doctor?" asked the town marshal, looking round. "I don't see that he can do any good, but he may as well try."

At that moment a doctor, who had been sent for came bustling in. He was a red-headed man. He knelt to examine the wounded man, but the latter waved him off, sat up, and hoarsely shouted:

"This crowd has played me low down. You took my gun away, and then rung in a red-headed man on me! Whoop! Whoo——"

He fell back, gave a sort of shiver, and was dead.

Do not fail to *order* a copy of *Short Stories* for July 8 to be reserved for you.

"THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION"

begins in that issue, and you cannot rely upon getting a copy in the ordinary way, even though you are a regular reader. The demand for this number will be colosal, a d we cannot reprint, so make assurance doubly sure by just reminding your newsman that you will want a copy of the July 8 *Short Stories* kept for you.

A LEEDS dentist is said to have a small boy sit in his office who yells at the top of his lungs occasionally. It lends an air of business to the establishment.

AN extreme specimen of a dandy alighted from a four-wheeler, and went round to pay the driver, giving him his exact fare. The poor old rack-of-bones mare turned her head to gaze at him.

"Yes," said the driver, confidentially to the horse, as the passenger moved away; "that's the blessed hobject you've been a-drawin' of."

"A MAN has to die to make anything out of life insurance," said the citizen.

"Oh, no," replied the insurance agent blandly. "It never died yet."

HE (after a tiff): "So you persist in breaking the engagement?"

Mature Fiancée: "Certainly. What do you take me for?"

He: "About forty. Better think it over: it may be your last chance."

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From now until November 25th a coupon will appear on the front page of cover of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES, SHORT STORIES, and PASTIMES. To the person who collects the greatest number of these coupons and sends them to us on a date we shall specify later, we will give the sum of One Hundred Pounds; to the collector of the second greatest number we will give Fifty Pounds, and so on until the whole 100,043 prizes have been awarded.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

This is the only competition that has ever been devised in which every competitor will get a prize.

All the articles enumerated above are of the best make and well worth possessing, therefore no prize will be given to any person who sends fewer than 200 coupons.

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A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss five. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same, your 200 coupons would win you £10 0.

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XXXII. (*continued.*)

WHITESOCK'S shrill, whinny of distress at being deserted, went to my heart and I plodded along in the most evil case I had ever found myself. No mare, no money, no weapons, active foes behind me, and a country before, where hiding would be another matter altogether to my last refuge. The only thing in my favour was that I knew every inch of it, and could turn it to the best account.

"Hereford," thought I, "if I can win as far, there will be a chance for me yet," and in thought I ran over the route.

Oxford, too, came into my mind, for Roger had heard that Jack Locking was there, his first harbour proving unsafe. I knew two or three places in Oxford where knowledge of my friend's quarters might be come at, for the city was familiar to me. After some balancing, however, I settled upon Hereford and began to plan my march. As I walked, I came to a rude track crossing the heath, and, following it for two hundred yards arrived at a point where it forked into two branches.

One ran south-west, and in that direction lay Hereford, the other full south-east. The road was soft and sandy, and along the south-western path ran two parallel lines of hoof marks. I remembered that I had directed Ieuan and Dafydd this way, and these must be the marks of their ponies' feet. One set of prints was not clean cut. I looked closer and saw that the pony was very lame.

As I raised my head I noted a peasant at work in the heath not far away. His bill hook rested idle in his hand and he hailed me, but I took no heed of him and turned to the South-east. I pushed on rapidly, running where the ground lay with me, walking fast elsewhere, and soon came to a high ridge commanding the country I had traversed. I looked back and saw no signs of pursuit, then hurried forward at a round pace.

Four miles of this travelling brought me to the edge of the heath, and the road now ran through cultivated land. It took a sudden bend and twisted through a farm-yard, passing between the house and the barn. Crossing from the one to the other was a big, round-faced country fellow, with a great wooden bucket in each hand. He stood at gaze when he saw me, and eyed me in open-mouthed curiosity.

A stranger, hatless and dishevelled, swinging a great quarterstaff as he strode, was a sight worth looking at, and he took his fill. He was directly in my path, and I stared him straight in the face, walked directly up to him, snatched his hat from his head, clapped it on my own, and marched away as fast as I could. He made never a sound, but stood there transfixed with astonishment, gaping at me, pails in hand.

At the corner of the farmyard I turned and glanced back. He had just found his voice, and was roaring out his anger, but still he did not move, and I left him there, a statue of amazement. I am aware that this was using Thomas Buck—for I know him well—very unfairly. But I was playing a game for my life, and this forcible borrowing of a hat was an essential move in that game.

I wanted a hat very badly, and I wanted Thomas to remember and be ready to testify that I had passed his way, and I had attained my object fully. A mile again I reached a little inn, and the landlord stood at the door serving ale to a couple of drovers. All three looked very hard at me, but I slouched my hat and appeared to avoid them. Six miles from Butley I arrived at a little hamlet where some women were talking around a well.

In full sight of them I turned to the left and travelled due east. The land about this part of the country was all unenclosed, and, half a mile from the hamlet, I turned aside and struck back westwards over the open country, moving very carefully along the lower levels, and taking advantage of every scrap of cover.

Two miles wary walking brought me into the heath again, and I pursued my way easily over its lonely face towards the south-west, now at last heading in my real direction.

"There," thought I, "I have laid a good scent along the wrong track for the pursuit that is certain to follow me,

East of that hamlet they will travel miles before it will be possible to gain another clue, and then they cannot be sure I have not passed."

And I thought I had been rather clever. Never once did I dream of the fashion in which the pursuit would be made. After turning my face to the proper quarter I settled my pace at a swift walk, and had made a dozen miles before the sun went down. I had now journeyed over twenty miles since I left Butley, and was hungry and tired. As the dusk fell, I seated myself on the projecting root of a great tree, and leant my back against its trunk to rest.

The air was mild and cool, and full of the sweet odours of the spring. Low in the west the sunset lingered in a broad band of shining sea-green, but eastward all was thick and grey. Presently a dim pall of cloud drew over and the great, slow drops of a spring evening shower pattered around me, filling the air with the delicious scent of newly-moistened earth. A cheerful twittering of birds sounded all over the plain and a thrush in the tree above me sang at intervals two or three notes, full and sweet.

As I sat there, looking back on the day, I saw clearly that it was all my own fault. The letter I had destroyed lay at the bottom of everything. I had had no opportunity of speech with Enid in the interval, and she knew nothing of it. Jack supposed that it was delivered and her civil reception of him would imply in his eyes an acceptance of its contents. Hence his sudden warmth, and presumption and the whole train of consequences.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ALE-HOUSE ON THE MOOR.

IT was quite dark when I moved on again and within half-a-mile I saw a twinkle of light straight before me. I reflected, and remembered that a small ale-house should be somewhere near at hand, and that must be it. I advanced warily, and soon stood within a dozen yards of the lighted window. If all was quiet, surely I might venture to get some food here. Now that I had a hat my appearance was in no way beyond ordinary for a country fellow. I slipped my quarterstaff under a bush, carefully marking the place that I might find it again, and edged up to the uncurtained window.

The first peep I took cheered my heart like a cordial, and brought the water of desire into my mouth. Beside a cheerful fire stood a table, and on either side of it sat Ieuan Gwyllt and Dafydd.

There they were at ease in their inn, a dish of smoking rashers of bacon and a big brown loaf between them. The good, hearty smell of the fried bacon crept through the crevices of the ill-fitting lattice, and tickled my nostrils richly with its savour. I had been very hungry before, and now my appetite became clamorous for a share of this toothsome banquet. The room was empty but for them, and I stepped forward and lifted the latch of the door. I went in and found myself in a passage which ran through the house. The landlord was coming along it in the opposite direction with a great jug of ale, and I followed him into the room where the Red Men of the Dusk were feasting. Ieuan looked up and saw my face over the landlord's shoulder.

"Well, indeed," said he with his ready smile, as for an expected guest, "you have come at last! Yes, that iss better than not to come at all. Take a drink of ale."

My hand was on the jug with less delay, I fear, than was polite, and I took a hearty draught which could not have given my parched throat more delight had it been fresh-brewed nectar.

"And you will have some supper with me," went on Ieuan amiably. "Come, landlord, some more bacon and a few eggs again. Here iss a loaf big enough for a dozen. We will finish the supper before we begin business. Then we can talk about the prices of things while we sit by the fire with another jug of ale."

Ieuan purred smoothly along, and I nodded a clownish agreement, as became my character, and the landlord bustled about and set out a fresh trencher and a chair before it. I seated myself and began to make havoc of the slices still left on the dish, and the food tasted as sweetly as it had smelt. Ieuan had come pretty well to an end of his meal, and he leant his elbows on the table, took his face between his hands, and watched me with a smile.

"Yes," said he, when the landlord had left the room, "I have a good eye to tell when a man iss hungry. You have run many miles on your feet since you last took some food."

"I have, Ieuan," I replied, "and I thank you for this, I can assure you."

Ieuan waved his hand, as bidding me be easy. "You have taken to the road again, that iss plain to see," he remarked. "How did they find you out?"

"I quarrelled with the fellow you saw at the inn yesterday."

"Yes, yes," agreed Ieuan, "it would be about Owain's sister. I could see that coming very clearly. But he wass not much of a man. His eye wass poor. You took a sword and killed him easy?"

"No," said I, "I did not go so far as that, but I handled him pretty roughly."

"H'm," said Ieuan, rather dissatisfied. "To kill iss the best. You are sparing yourself many enemies by that."

Our conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of fresh customers, a couple of yokels of the neighbourhood who called for ale, and sat in a corner to drink together. They stayed about an hour, and in this time I finished my meal and sat in the warmest nook of the chimney corner drying the last moisture out of my clothes. Ieuan took a seat near me, and we conversed upon the price of cattle, dropping our voices as we came apparently to the pitch of the bargain, until we had reached a point where we could talk of what we pleased. I told him of the line I had taken, and he, a past master in such arts, approved.

"How far iss this, now, from your house?" he asked.

"Not more than twelve miles," I replied. "I have doubled about so. I was surprised to see you had not got further yourself."

"My pony went very lame," replied Ieuan. "He iss only a little one, and my weight has been too much for him on so long a journey, so I stopped here to give him a good rest till to-morrow."

He bit his lip and stared thoughtfully into the fire.

"Now," said he, "here iss the plan. To-morrow morning, before the daylight comes, you must go from this place in my clothes. It iss lucky we are about the same size. Have you some money?"

"Not a penny," I replied.

"Never mind," rejoined Ieuan, "you have a good right to a few pounds out of the little bag here," and he touched his breast where the gold lay, "enough to carry you to a place where you will be safe again. Are you thinking to go far?"

"Within a dozen miles of Hereford."

"A little journey that," said Ieuan. "Well, you take these clothes, when you will look very respectable, and by daylight you must be two or three miles away. Walk to the next town and hire a horse, and off you go. Dafydd and I will slip away with you, or the change in clothes will be seen."

I gratefully consented to Ieuan's plan which held out a good hope of safety, and as the landlord now came to give us his company, it was not possible to discuss the subject further. For a couple of hours he sat with us and prosed about country affairs and local gossip. Ieuan, who had his own reason for doing so, ordered liberal supplies of ale and urged the host to drink. He needed but little encouragement and disposed cheerfully of almost all that he brought. Seasoned toper as he was, his stories at last became shorter and more broken, and his head wagged drowsily. Ieuan

informed him that I should stay the night, and he invited us to go to bed at once. Ieuan declined but went with him to learn where we were to be quartered, and then the door was made fast and the host and his family, a wife and two shock-headed children, got to their bed and left us by the fire. Dafydd had long been asleep, stretched on a bench.

"Ar,e you going to bed, Ieuan?" I asked.

"No I am not," he replied. "I just went to look to make that man easy in his mind. We will sit here and sleep a little till it iss time to start. We shall be more sure not to stop too long."

This was entirely to my mind, and I took some fuel from a st ck in the corner of the room and replenished the fire. We sat and talked for some time again, and then the fatigues of the day began to assert themselves. Ieuan became silent, and before long I slid into a restless slumber.

Of a sudden I awoke, instantly and completely. I had an uneasy feeling at my heart that I had been wakened by a sound of danger; yet all was still. Ieuan had dropped asleep in his chair, and was breathing heavily. The fire had died down, and the room was dark. There seemed to ring in my ears the distant bark of a dog.

"From some farm close at hand," thought I, and stretched out my cramped legs and resolved to sleep no more but watch the rest of the night. I was seated in the corner of a high-backed settle with the window behind me. A faint glimmer seemed to come into the air, and I sprang to my feet. With a beating heart I perceived the window full of a red, dancing light.

I ran to it, and, even as I did so, the loud baying of a hound rang out in the silence of a windless night, and I saw a plump of flaring links not thirty yards away, borne on at a run, and heading straight for the house.

"Ieuan," I called quickly, but my voice was drowned by a great hound giving tongue furiously without. His deep, hollow bark was followed by a whine and a swift scratching at the outer door.

I recognised the note with a bitter sense of betrayal, though the poor brute had done it unconsciously. All my doublings and twistings had been in vain. Ranger had been set upon my track, and led my foes unerringly to my refuge.

Ieuan leapt from his chair and ran to my side.

"Enemies," said he, cool and wide awake at once.

"Yes," said I. "Is there a door behind?"

The light of the torches flashed in through the windows and cast our shadows before us as we sprang into the passage.

"Surround the house," shouted a voice I knew. It was done upon the instant.

The whole building stood open and naked to the moor without fence or inclosure, and while we groped our way along a littered, pitch dark, and unfamiliar passage, our foes outran us.

"Here it iss," said Ieuan, laying his hand on a bolt and half-drawing it.

He growled something and shot it back, as the light of the well-pitched links shone red under the door and through the crevices of its ill-fitting planks.

"I can see them," said Ieuan, with his eye at a crack. "There are four. Two of them carry a light and a sword, and two have guns. They are standing about five yards away, and the guns are pointed at this door."

By this time the knocking was fast and furious at the front door, and the landlord was crying out in a state of alarm.

"He will open when he knows who is there," said I "unless we stop him."

"Dafydd," cried Ieuan softly.

An answering grunt came from the darkness behind us, Ieuan uttered a short, quick command in their own tongue,

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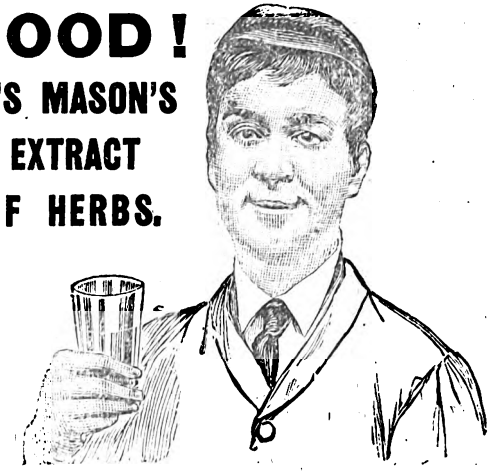

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and the dwarf shuffled off to silence the landlord and keep him from admitting our enemies.

"Who wass that who spoke outside?" asked Ieuan.

"Sir John Postgate—a magistrate," I replied.

"A magistrate!" repeated Ieuan. "And iss it certain he has come to fetch you?"

"I think it very likely," said I.

"Well," rejoined Ieuan, "it may be. But it will be best to keep him outside for the good of everybody."

It was scarcely possible that Sir John Postgate could have information which would justify him in detaining my companions but it was clear that Ieuan meant to run no risks, and the truth is that magistrates were no more to his fancy than, at present, to mine.

"If we keep a strong door between us," said Ieuan, "there iss a chance to think of a plan, but if they get in and begin to strike and shoot you cannot see your way at all."

Twice or thrice the loud command to open was repeated amid a rain of blows from musket-butts, and we returned towards the door that was being assailed. Suddenly a stream of light poured on us from behind. We turned and saw the back door wide open, and a tiny childish figure standing on the threshold. One of the children of the house had evaded Dafydd and drawn the bolt. Ieuan gave a great cry and ran. The child started and ran out of the house, and before Ieuan Gwyllt reached the door the torch-bearers leapt in and blocked the way. The passage was wide, and both pushed upon him at once as his sword flew out to meet them.

The torches were eagerly snatched from the hands of the leading men by their companions, leaving them free to handle the Red Man of the Dusk. To handle Ieuan! He fought easily, without hurry or miscalculation. Their blades darted at him from either side and parried every thrust, checked every cut, then when his chance came, drove three inches of the point into one, and, with a lashing twist of his iron wrist, laid open the cheek of the other. Just as he delivered these strokes, I saw a musket barrel thrust between the swordsmen and pushed upon Ieuan's body.

I dropped on one knee behind him and watched the marksman. He was crouched close behind his friends and before the trigger came within easy reach the round, black circle of the muzzle was within arm's length. I shot out my hand as I saw the musketeer drop his towards the lock and wrenched the weapon aside. As I did so the piece was discharged, but the bullet flew clear under my arm. I tugged at the weapon with all my might, and, thanks to the surprise, plucked it clean out of my enemy's grasp. I gave a shout of joy and leapt to my feet and sprang abreast of Ieuan, clubbing the ponderous firelock. The first fellow upon whom I laid it wore, luckily for him, a stout steel cap, but he dropped like a stone and knocked over another against whom he was dashed.

Suddenly I became aware of Jack Postgate. I saw him over the heads of his followers, for he was bringing up the rear. He had raised himself above them, and, I fancy, was standing on a horse block just at the door, the upper part of his body leaning in, while he looked over the fight and shouted commands and encouragement. With a look of malicious triumph he levelled a pistol at me and took careful aim. I bounded furiously at the people before me, striking fierce, butting blows with the iron musket-heel; and thinking how long a time it was before Jack fired, and perhaps I should reach him yet, when his pistol cracked. I drew a long breath when I found my brains still safe inside my skull, yet knew the bullet had cut me somewhere, for I felt blood trickling warm into my neck.

I saw a second pistol in Jack's hand; but he had no time to use it. His followers—stout men of their bands as they were—had had their fill, and they turned and swept through the door, driving him from his perch, and dragging their wounded with them. Ieuan leapt after them, swung the door to, and shot the bolt home—just in time.

(To be continued.)

Minister: "I am exceedingly gratified at the wonderful increase in the attendance of men at our Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday evening prayer meetings. For the past week the church has been thronged with men."

His Wife: "It's spring-cleaning time."

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N.S.O.G.: "Not yet a clerk, eh? Errand boy, I presume? Well, legs are as good as brains in some departments."

Lady: "What! 2s. 8d. for waiting three-quarters of an hour! Nonsense, man! It was only ten minutes by my watch!"

Cabby (insinuatingly): "Wasn't it, miss? Well, then, I s'pose it was a missin' o' your pretty face as made it seem three-kervarters of an hour!"

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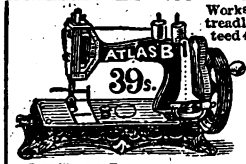

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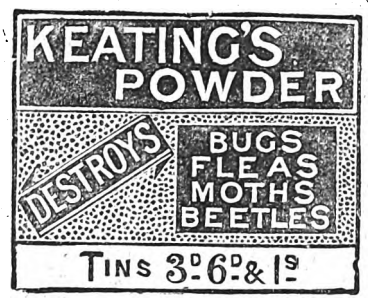

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

S. O.—A correspondent of a scientific turn of mind has collected the smoke deposited on a little plot of ground, and obtained from it two grains of soot. Sup osing that soot is deposited as plentifully elsewhere in the 120 square miles which London covers, he says this would give for the whole area 1,000 tons. As the quantity measured fell in ten days, a month's allowance would need 1,000 horses to cart it off, and these stretched in line would extend four miles. Hence London's black fogs.

ACT.—In the passing of Bills no British Sovereign has ventured to exercise the right of veto—that is, of withholding the royal assent—since 1707.

DINE.—It is computed that 950,000 dinners and lunches are served daily in London restaurants.

R. E.—Beds are quite an innovation in Russia, and many well-to-do houses are still unprovided with them. Peasants sleep on the tops of their ovens; middle-class people and servants roll themselves up in sheep-skins and lie down near stoves; soldiers rest upon wooden cots without bedding; and it is only within the last few years that students in schools have been allowed beds.

BIZ.—March is the slackest month of the year for business.

TEMPLE.—There is a temple of Siva near Allahabad, in India, surrounded by a high mound, composed wholly of the fragments of earthern bottles. On one of the last days of February, from twenty thousand to forty thousand pilgrims assemble, each provided with two or three earthern bottles containing water from the Ganges. These they break and throw upon the mound.

ANGLO.—The number of people at present who speak English is said to be 116,000,000.

T. G.—The Wos, a West African tribe, used to indulge in the custom of killing every male child whose top teeth appeared before the lower ones, believing that the child, if allowed to live, would grow into a man of monstrous disposition.

BIRD.—If you want to encourage birds to come into your garden you should try hanging up a raw meat bone on a stick in the garden. It is considered a great delicacy by the feathered tribes.

MIGNON.—The mignonette is the national flower of Spain.

A. G.—France is the best cultivated country in Europe.

A. R.—Artificial legs and arms were in use in Egypt as early as B. C. 700. They were made by the priests, who were the physicians of that early time.

TONE.—There are forty-eight different materials used in constructing a piano, laying no fewer than sixteen different countries under contribution, and employing forty-five different hands.

LAW.—No fewer than five systems of law are in use in Germany. You pay your money, of course, but you are not allowed to take your choice.

Q.—It is known as a fact in geology, that below the depth of thirty feet the earth becomes regularly warmer as we descend. On an average the increase is at the rate of one degree Fahrenheit for every fifth foot. At the bottom of the mines in Cornwall—a depth of one thousand two hundred feet—the thermometer stands at eighty-eight, equal to high summer heat. At this rate rocks and metals would be melted twenty miles below the surface; and down in the bowels of the earth, several hundred miles, the heat would be ten thousand times hotter than molten iron.

PLAYER.—The idea entertained by some people that violin-playing is bad for the health is not wholly without foundation. Unless care is taken that the instrument is held in a proper position, the chest may be contracted and a young girl may even become hump-backed.

H. T.—King Alfred was personally engaged in fifty-six battles by sea and land.

F. J.—There are about 700 newspapers and journals issued within a radius of six miles from Charing Cross.

BILL.—Theatres in Spain have no programmes. A bill in the lobby sometimes gives the cast; but most of the actors remain unknown by name. The curtain is devoted to advertisements, and in Madrid theatres advertising cards are affixed with the numbers on the back of each seat.

GLASS.—There is one terrible circumstance in connection with the Venetian glass industry, which is that after many years of work, when those employed in this industry are between forty and fifty years of age, they begin to lose their sight, and after a short while become wholly blind. There seems to be no remedy for this.

HAY.—There have been many theories to account for the spontaneous combustion of haystacks. This phenomenon is now ascribed to a microbe which breeds in the close, moist atmosphere of the hay, and causes a fermentation which generates heat and finally ignition.

SALT.—IT is in this country that most salt is produced. The whole world's produce per annum is 7,300,000 tons. Of this quantity 5,280,000 tons are produced in Europe; and of the latter total Great Britain turns out 2,235,000 tons.

A. T. E.—To "dance attendance" is an expression borrowed from the medieval custom which compelled the bride at a wedding to dance with whomsoever asked her. No matter how low the condition or how objectionable the person, the bride could not refuse.

N. E. D.—Snakes are one of the scourges of India. Thousands of people die yearly from their bite. In the last twenty-two years the number of deaths attributed to this cause has reached the enormous total of 433,289.

J. P.—Street refuse in Italy is sold by public auction.

S. T.—Careful weighing shows that an ordinary bee, not loaded, weighs the five-thousandth part of a pound, so that it takes 5,000 bees to make a pound. But the loaded bee, when he comes in fresh from the fields and flowers, freighted with honey or bee-bread, often weighs nearly three times more.

EAST.—Arabic coins have a sentence from the Koran, and generally the Caliph's name, but never an image.

F. S.—Buddhist fishermen in Siam justify their trade by declaring that they do not kill the fish, but only take them out of the water, whereupon the fish die a natural death.

D. P.—In France, degrees and diplomas are granted by the Government, and not by the universities, as in this country.

SIZE.—The tallest and shortest people of Europe, the Norwegians and the Laps, live side by side.

PEER.—There have been thirteen cases on record during the present century of suicide amongst members of the peerage.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
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Front page, whole ,, ,, ...	12 10 0
,, half	6 5 0

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SWAN WHITE FLOATING SOAP

is preferred by ladies of refined taste, because, being exquisitely pure, it makes dainty fabric equal to new; and because its pure ingredients having a TONIC action on the skin, it is a delightful soap for the Bath and Toilet, and is especially suitable for baby's tender skin.

A Purer Soap

is beyond the Art of Soapmaking.

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, Soapmakers to the Queen.

Youth and Beauty

OBTAINED BY THE CONSTANT USE OF LILLIE POWDER.

All Men should use it after Shaving.
Ladies should never be without it.

"The LILLIE POWDER" has long been a favourite with all who pride themselves on their complexions. Try the LILLIE POWDER. I am sure you will like it."—*The Gentlewoman.*

"I have always used your Lillie Powder after shaving, and have no wish to *ever* use any other."—**Seymour Hicks.**

Most Beneficial.
"Lillie Powder is most beneficial to the skin, and I shall always use it."—**Rhyllis Broughton.**

Most Exquisite.
"I think your new Lillie Powder most exquisite."—**Adelina Patti.**

ASK YOUR CHEMIST TO GET IT FOR YOU,

but be sure it bears the above label beautifully printed in Red and Black upon a delicate Pink Paper. Insist on LILLIE POWDER, as substitutes may be injurious.

Invented by Mrs. Langtry. Prepared under the strict supervision of Mr. Wm. Clarkson (Her Majesty's Perruquier)
THREE TINTS—WHITE, FLESH-COLOUR, AND CREAM.

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BANKRUPTCY.—*Re* BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.
Late of Old Street, London.

F. HODGSON & SON, of Leeds, have purchased for Cash the whole of the business, goodwill, and effects from the official Trustee in Bankruptcy. Illustrated Sale Prices of Brussels, Axminster, Tapestry, Velvet, and Foreign Carpets and Hearthrugs, can be had post free if when writing you mention *Short Stories*, 24/6/99.

THE "MONARCH"
RECORD REDUCTION SALE

REDUCED SALE PRICE — STUPENDOUS SALE OF ELEGANT — FORMER PRICE

3/6 REAL BRUSSELS HEARTHRUGS. 5/-

EACH. — In all the latest Oriental Art Designs, Style, Effect, and Colourings. They are equal in appearance to goods costing from 1 to 2 guineas. They measure 3 feet wide by 6 feet long, are extraordinarily heavy, and are guaranteed to wear well, and will never fail to bring orders. — EACH.

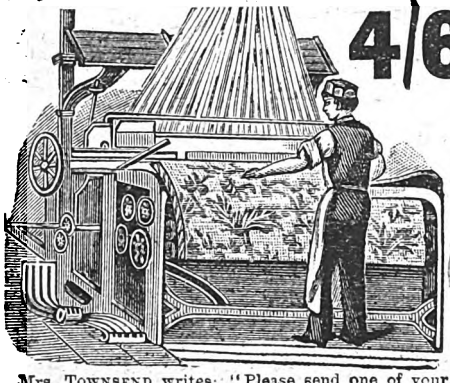
Postage 6d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER: 3 Hearthrugs, 10s.; 6 for 19s. 6d.

OUR NEW VENTURE!

Yes, two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright.)

H.R.H. Prince L. of Battenberg. H.R.H. Prince K. Bigit, Siam. Marquis of Breadalbane. Sir Henry de Bathe. Sir Henry Bellingham. Sir E. H. Blair, Bart. H.I.H. Eugene de Christoforo. Princess Palæologoe Nicephorœ Commenœ. Duchess of Wellington. Marchioness of Bredalbane. Marchioness of Hastings. Archbishop of York. Princess de Croy.



4/6

To Readers of "Short Stories," 24/6/99, on receipt of Postal Order or Stamps, value 4s. 6d. (Regd.) We will send you THE LARGEST GENUINE REVERSIBLE CARPET in BRUSSELS PATTERN WITH RUG ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address on receipt of amount. Suitable for drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.

Special Offer—2 CARPETS and 2 RUGS, 8s. (*Cut this out.*)

Illustrated Bargain Catalogues of Carpets, Hearthrugs, Table Linen, Curtains, &c., Post Free, if mentioning "Short Stories," 24/6/99, when writing.

"SHORT STORIES" 24/6/99 CARPET COUPON.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amounts we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied. (Signed) **F. HODGSON & SON.**

10 Charlesworth Street, Stockport, 15/1/99.

Mrs. Townsend writes: "Please send one of your 'Reversible' Carpets as soon as possible. I may add we have had one in wear three years, and it has given great satisfaction."

PRODICIOUS SALE OF THE "PRUDENTIAL" TURKEY PATTERN CARPETS (REGD.)

Reversible, woven throughout, bordered, richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

6 ft.	by 6 ft.	... ...	2 11		10½ ft.	by 12 ft.	11 6
6 ft.	by 7½ ft.	... ...	3 11		9 ft.	by 15 ft.	12 6
6 ft.	by 9 ft.	... ...	4 9		12 ft.	by 12 ft.	12 9
7½ ft.	by 9 ft.	... ...	5 11	REDUCED SALE PRICE.	13 ft.	by 13½ ft.	14 6
9 ft.	by 9 ft.	... ...	7 6		12 ft.	by 15 ft.	15 9
9 ft.	by 10½ ft.	... ...	8 6		12 ft.	by 18 ft.	19 6
9 ft.	by 12 ft.	... ...	9 6		12 ft.	by 21 ft.	22 6

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Regd.) to match above Carpets, sent for 1/6 extra, size 2yd. long and 1yd. wide. SPECIAL OFFER.—Three Hearthrugs for 4/3, or Six for 8/-, or Twelve for 15/6. Sterling value.

Springfield, Chalford, Stroud, 21/1/99.

Mrs. Heblas writes: "Kindly send me a 'Prudential' Carpet, 12 feet by 15 feet, at 15/9. Light shade preferred. I had two the same. They had lasted for seven years."

We rely upon spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a quarter of a century. All Orders despatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post.

N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates. Telegraphic Address: "Eclipse, Leeds." Telephone No. 948.

Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SON, Manufacturers, Importers and Merchants, **Woodsley Road, LEEDS.**

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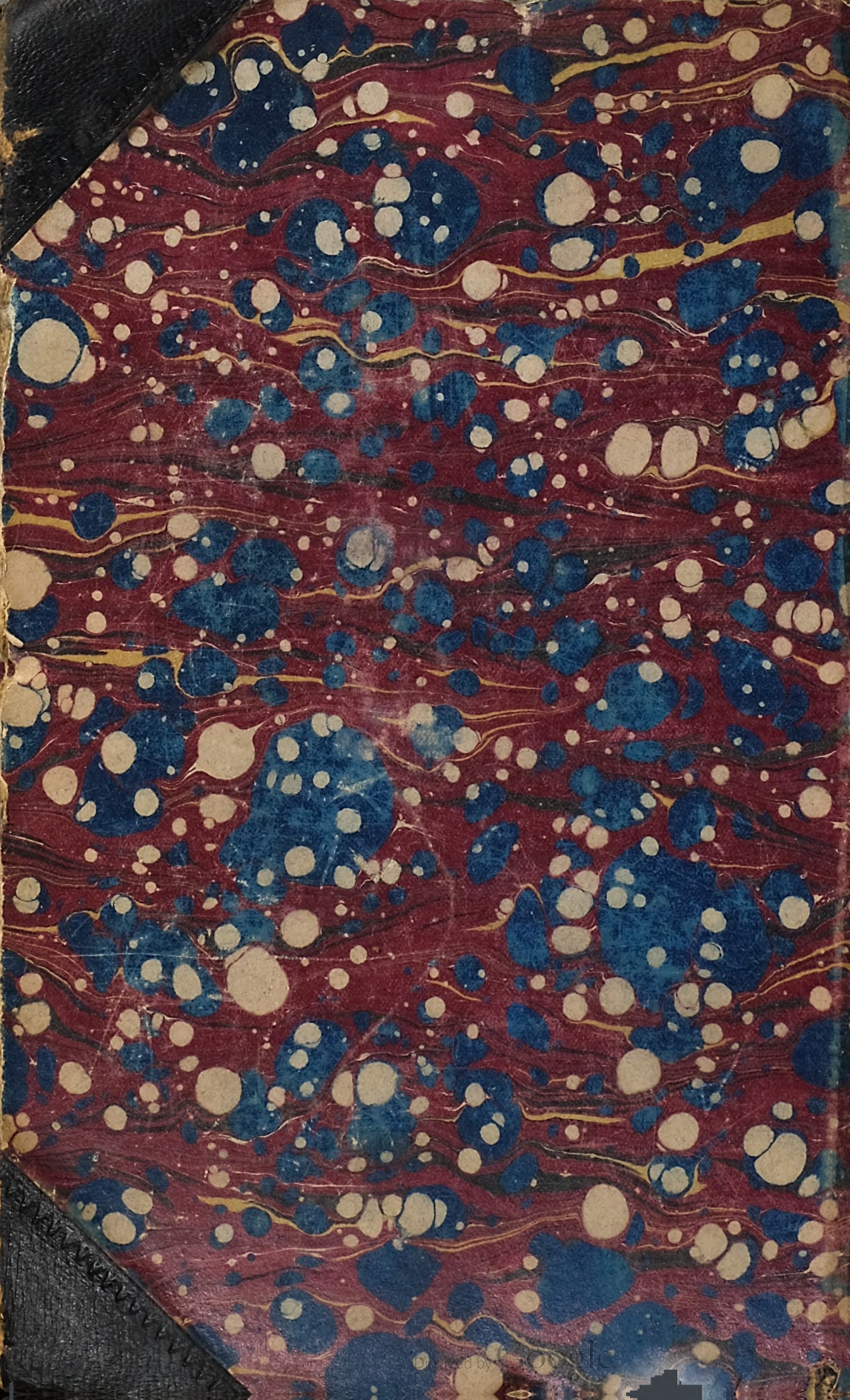
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